

THE ARGOSY

MAY 1901



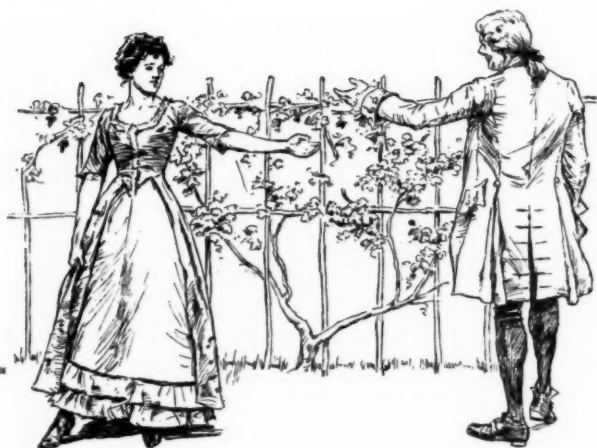
MAY

SHE issues from her home of tears
The crownless Queen of all the
years ;
The rumours of the Earth's unrest
Raise hidden raptures in her breast.
Across the world's great window-sills,
Like molten hues of daffodils
The sudden sunlight comes and goes !
A premonition of the rose
That lies upon the cheek of June
On darkling clouds is lightly strewn—
The under-silver melts away
And hark ! it is the voice of May.

She issues from her home of tears—
Sky-sweet her sunward face appears.
The winter snows now intermeet
In daisy-drifts around her feet,
And written on the yielding rain
Lost summers come to her again.

The tints of ev'ry flower that grew
In those fair gardens which she knew
Dissolve and mingle in the arch
That binds triumphant May to March !
Her Queendom is a moment's bliss—
Heav'n's highest, most impassioned kiss—
Then lo ! that high translucent bow
Is as the summers long ago.

FRED G. BOWLES.



MALICIOUS FORTUNE¹

(The Editor has found it necessary to make this slight alteration in the title of Mrs. Düring's Story)

BY STELLA M. DÜRING, AUTHOR OF "BETWEEN THE DEVIL
AND THE DEEP SEA," ETC. ETC.

CHAPTER XII

"HAVE you ever seen any Hungarian embroidery? I am working a cushion cover. It is rather—unusual," and Helen shook out a square of silk on which her skillful needle had raised a rich design, glowing, daring, a little bizarre, into which she had as a matter of fact worked a little bit of herself without knowing it.

"Yes, it's very pretty. I don't think I care much for fancy work."

Helen sighed unconsciously. "I hardly know Mrs. Colquhoun, and I don't like her!" Her own words of a few days ago came back to her with a little pang of reproach, for she could not say that she definitely disliked Mrs. Colquhoun; there was nothing to dislike about her. As far as Helen could see there was not much to like either. She was a woman one would credit with all the virtues on sight. Helen had hoped with the spice of mischief that was part of her, to discover one saving little vice amongst them; but she was unconsciously forgetting even to look for it now.

"She is a bundle of negations," she told herself, not that she was annoyed, only wearied. "She doesn't read much, it tires her; she doesn't care about gardening, it makes her fingers dirty; she doesn't like fancy work, it seems such a waste of time. I haven't found anything she does like yet, except her husband. When he is in the room she lives, when he is out of it she exists till he comes back. I wonder——"

¹ Copyright 1901 by Stella M. Düring in the United States of America.

She broke off her thought suddenly, studying the quiet, listless figure, in its sweeping black robes, furtively but intently. The woman who had not only won but held Keith Carstairs' heart for ten long years had for Helen her own peculiar interest. She was beautiful according to a certain standard, but that standard was not Helen's. She was tall and willowy, with a pretty pale mouth that drooped pathetically at the corners, and large, soft, pale-blue eyes, that filled with limpid tears very readily if anything touched her. Her soft hair of palest gold rayed away from her face, and formed a lambent glory about her small head like the halo of a mediæval saint.

"She is ethereal—or washed out, just as one's tastes may prompt one to describe her," Helen told herself. "But I don't wonder he worships her; she looks the very incarnation of all that a man most yearns for in a woman—gentleness, purity, devotion!" Poor Helen's eyes darkened and widened; no one could say that of her! "I will like her, I will!" But for the danger, to which she was fully alive, of cordially and most unjustly hating her, Miss Thorneycroft's resolution would not have been quite so forcibly driven home. "I wonder if she knows how fond he is of her."

Of course she knew! Did not a woman always know? Miss Thorneycroft's smile, though frankly cynical, was kindly. Then something in the melancholy of the other's face, the depression of her whole attitude, appealed to her sharply. She went over and took the slim white hands, so listless and so chill, into her own firm warm ones.

"You mustn't fret like this, you really mustn't! If you sit and brood and mourn and do nothing you will be ill. Get up, Edith—may I call you Edith, like Anita? Come out with me, see how beautiful it is out of doors! And what good does it do—to grieve always? He wouldn't wish it, if he could see, you know he wouldn't."

"I—can't help it," but she rose obediently and slipped a responsive arm about Helen's waist. "I think about it always. It was so dreadful—and I was so fond of him. And when the others come in they will talk about it, they always talk about it."

"They mustn't. I shall tell them so—it is making you ill." And when *he* came back, as he would come back, and saw her drooping, shrinking, withering under the blow, he would break his heart for self-reproach, for which there was no just reason. "Dear, I will call you dear, you must rouse yourself. I will help you. We will find something you care about—and do it."

"Thank you, but I don't think I care about anything much." Then feeling she had been a little ungracious, she laid her lips a moment to the velvet of Helen's cheek. "You are very sweet and very kind," she said gently. "I think if I were much with you I should love you very dearly."

The words pressed a little dull ache into Helen's heart. She could understand so exactly what it was that had attracted him; and, as women, she and Mrs. Colquhoun were the very antitheses of each other.

She glanced from herself to Mrs. Colquhoun almost wistfully; the temptation to compare herself physically, mentally, and morally with the elder woman beset her again and again.

"I am as tall as you are," she said smiling, "I didn't know that."

"Oh, I am not very tall," with a shade more interest, "I only look it. I'm not quite five feet five."

"Neither am I," with a peculiar satisfaction.

"Do you know where my husband is?"

His voice was heard that moment in the hall. Philip was with him and they were coming towards the drawing-room.

"Braithwaite is still in Egypt, isn't he?"

"Yes, he went to join Moresby, just before the second inquiry. I often wonder whether anything will happen when he gets back."

"Why, what should happen?"

"Oh, things looked very black, and that's the truth. I believe the police are only waiting till he gets home again—to take steps in the matter."

"Do you mean he's likely to be arrested?"

"Very likely. You see he was brother to that poor girl who was frozen, and he always looked upon L'Estrange as more to blame than Moresby in the matter. I've heard him threaten

what he would do more than once, and it came out at the inquest——”

“There!”—and Mrs. Colquhoun glanced at Helen, her lips quivering like a chidden child’s.

Helen walked crisply out of the drawing-room and closed the door behind her.

“I wish,” she began, a scarlet spot of excitement on either cheek, “that if you must discuss the inquest you wouldn’t do it where Mrs. Colquhoun can hear you.” She checked herself suddenly. If it had fallen to Mrs. Colquhoun herself to make the protest how very differently she would have done it. “I’m very sorry if I sound cross,” she went on, “but you don’t seem to realise that it is making her seriously ill.”

Colquhoun looked suddenly anxious.

“Where is she?” he asked.

Helen indicated the drawing-room and laid a light hand on Philip’s arm.

“Philip, one moment, what was it you said just now about Mr. Braithwaite? Is he likely to be arrested?”

Philip glanced at the girl’s flashing eyes and flushed cheeks. It was not only Mrs. Colquhoun on whom the constant harping on one string was having a disastrous effect.

“It’s—it’s nothing, Nell,” he said lamely. “I, perhaps, over-estimate chances. You see Colquhoun and I are both anxious some one should suffer for it, that is what makes us talk so much about it.”

“But is Mr. Braithwaite likely to be accused?”

“It’s not impossible. They are certain to accuse some one.”

“But have you heard anything definite?”

“Oh, no, nothing at all. I just—thought, you know.”

Helen breathed again. It was only Philip’s idea, and, as he himself acknowledged, it had no definite foundation. There was no need to suggest to Major Carstairs when she saw him again that the suspicion that had glided harmlessly past his head was likely to fall on some one else’s. Besides he was at the inquest, he must have heard all that Philip had heard. If the danger existed he would have seen it, and would certainly have mentioned it. Philip was watching the girl’s changing face.

A new anxiety in its lines, a new sharpness in its pretty rounded outlines, struck him suddenly.

"Look here, Nell," he said, "think about something else."

"I would be very glad—if you and Mr. Colquhoun would let me," she answered quickly, and Philip laughed a little and patted her shoulder as he passed her.

It was a fortnight now since Helen had listened to such explanation of his conduct as Major Carstairs was able to give. In spite of the fact, of which she reminded herself again and again, that as far as the very head and front of his offending, his insulting threat to herself, was concerned, his explanation was no excuse at all; what he had intended to do was so very much less iniquitous than what she thought he had intended to do that insensibly she had softened towards him. He had calculated on just such softening, he had triumphantly demonstrated to her that, though he had undoubtedly wronged her, it was in so much less a degree than she had imagined that practically it amounted to no wrong at all. He had sailed away in confidence and security to come back armed with the proofs of his story and of her positive release from imaginary bondage, intending to claim from her gratitude that she had escaped the greater evil, forgiveness for the lesser. And where did he find himself? Face to face with the fact that the very worst she had ever anticipated had fallen upon her, that he had unintentionally, but none the less surely, inflicted upon her the very wrong of which he had so indignantly assured her he was incapable, that the shackles he had forged for her were on indeed, and altogether beyond his power to loosen. He might well sit in his London hotel sombre and silent, dreading the coming interview with his wife!—as he had never dreaded anything yet.

Nothing, however, was to be gained by sitting there, and the interview was inevitable. The day on which Helen had set herself so steadily to the rather difficult task of liking Mrs. Colquhoun, he took his courage in both hands and journeyed north to Combe Salterton. He had a plan to propose. To be sure the success attending his former plans had not been such as to justify any great amount of faith in a new one, but it was

better to present himself as the bearer of a bad suggestion than to present himself with no suggestion at all.

It was evening and the first week in October. The bright fire in the drawing-room looked inviting, for the first breath of frost was in the air. The three ladies gathered about it were talking gaily—at least Anita was talking, and the other two were listening. Colquhoun and Beresford, forbidden to discuss the inquest and unable to think of anything else, were silent perforce.

"And so," Anita concluded triumphantly, "I sent to every shop in London for patterns of silks. They sent me beauties, all of them. I made the most lovely set of cushions for the bazaar you ever saw, and they didn't cost me a halfpenny."

Helen laughed a little to herself; she always found something amusing in Anita's little meannesses, but Edith Colquhoun looked horrified.

"Do you—think it right to do like that?" she asked.

"Right!" echoed Anita, raising wide blue eyes to her visitor's, and for the first time Helen realised how very different blue eyes can be. "Do you bother yourself about that sort of thing?"

The footman threw the door open.

"Major Carstairs!" he announced.

Helea sat with her eyes glued to her shoe-buckles, she dare not, she could not, look up. She felt the flash of amused astonishment in her sister's glance at her as Anita rose to greet her guest, and the next moment she herself was mechanically shaking hands with the man that for two days she had regarded as a most unwelcome husband. She felt her hand tremble as it lay in his, and she could not meet his steady look. Her intolerable annoyance at her own folly helped to steady her nerves. She raised her head with sudden determination, and her eyes filled with almost painful interest; he was speaking to Mrs. Colquhoun.

"I called at Cromwell road yesterday. They told me you were away from home, but not that you were here."

That was all he said, and he said it easily and lightly enough. Mrs. Colquhoun smiled exactly as she ought to smile, answered

with cool but friendly cordiality, exactly as she ought to answer. "It's perfect," Helen told herself, "too perfect," she added, with a bitterness whose roots she did not care to trace. And then she noticed, with a strange pang, that easy as his manner was, perfect as was his control of voice and expression, his very effort for self-mastery was draining his face of colour; it faded as she watched him till his very lips were pale.

"It is seeing—her—again," Helen told herself, a sudden chill at her heart. "How he must care!"

But for once she was mistaken; his agitation had nothing to do with Mrs. Colquhoun. It was the touch of her own hand that had shaken his pulses—the pretty hand, fine and strong and slender, that used to be so cordial and was now so cold. With that rapid mental photography, that is among the most subtle of feminine accomplishments, she took in with one swiftly passing glance every detail of his appearance as he stood at the corner of the rug warming one hand at the fire and facing the little group of friends. How handsome he looked, his dark eyes, quick and kindly, passing from one to the other, his whole bearing alert and soldierly. Yet there was a touch of anxiety about him that was new, something weary, almost haggard in his face; and though his pleasant glance went frankly enough from one to another of his questioners, he never glanced at her.

"Staying at the 'Dolphin'?" Nonsense, man, you'll stay here," Philip told him cordially.

"Of course you will, Major Carstairs!" Anita hastened to assure him. "A room must be arranged for Major Carstairs," she told the man who answered her ring. "Tell Mrs. Proctor to see to it at once, William, please."

"But it is only for one night, Mrs. Beresford," Carstairs protested. "It really doesn't seem worth while to trouble you."

"It doesn't matter if it is only for an hour; you come to us as a matter of course, doesn't he, Nell?" Carstairs looked sharply at her; was there a touch of suggestion in that smiling appeal to her sister? "And why must you go rushing back to town to-morrow? Don't you know you owe us a week?"

There isn't much the matter," she told herself shrewdly, "or he wouldn't be here. And Nell is miserable, any one can see it! I'll put things right if I can!"

"Well, you see, my time is getting short. My leave is up in a fortnight unless I can get an extension, and I have so very much to see to."

"Going back to Burmah?" asked Colquhoun.

"Yes, on the sixteenth."

Helen caught her breath in a painful gasp; it was the first she had heard of it. Really she knew very little about this man, who for two days had held towards her the very closest of human relationships. And how did his going affect Edith Colquhoun? Not at all, to all appearance, nor his coming either. She was calm, serene, beautiful, and utterly indifferent. Suddenly Helen felt the rank injustice of the smothered pain smarting at the bottom of her own heart. What business had she with it? It belonged by divine right to Edith Colquhoun.

"Oh, but you'll stay to-morrow," urged Philip; "you can spare one day?"

For one instant Helen looked up at him and her eyes were full of unconscious appeal. If he stayed she might learn more about both past and future. That he had come to tell her something she was very well aware, but it would not be the half of what she wanted to know. He caught the look, it was the first time their eyes had met. There was an empty chair by Helen's side; he came deliberately across the rug and took it. It was his by right, and he was conscious of it, but he did not know how deeply that same consciousness tinged his manner. Anita and Philip exchanged a quick look, and Anita stooped to hide the smile in her eyes.

"I can't stay to-morrow, thank you, Beresford," he spoke to Philip, but his real reply was for Helen, "but if I may I'll run down again before I leave England. I—would like to."

"Then do, my dear fellow. We shall all be delighted to see you, and you shall have complete liberty."

"As you had last time," put in Anita, mischievously. He had been a most unsatisfactory visitor last time, and she had by no means forgotten it.

"As every one always has in your house, Mrs. Beresford!" with quick compliment. "It is in my opinion one of the pleasantest characteristics a house can have."

"Now, that's very pretty of you," said Anita, much gratified. "We will keep up our character as Liberty Hall, I promise you. It's funny, but houses have their characteristics, as you say, and the funniest thing about it is that people may come and people may go, but the peculiarity clings to the building and affects all who come to it. Don't you remember Heatherclough, Philip?"

Anita was fairly launched on a flood of anecdote and reminiscence. Carstairs took advantage of it to speak to Helen.

"I must see you to-night, some time; I have come on purpose—I don't like back gates."

Helen turned red and white by turns. There always would, there always must be about their intercourse the flavour of the back gate, and she did not like it either. She could not answer; there was a sudden lull in the conversation. It began again in a moment more animated than before, but still she did not answer. Carstairs spoke again.

"When?" he asked curtly. He did not mean to be curt, but what was before him was so painful that he could not help it.

Still Helen did not speak. He glanced quickly at her; wouldn't she—or couldn't she?

"I'm sorry to press you," he said rapidly when his next opportunity presented itself, "but it's a 'must be.' Will you come down here again when the others are safely upstairs?"

For an instant Helen turned full upon him, startled, horrified at the enormity of the suggestion. Then her anger and indignation chilled suddenly. If he were her husband—and she had no proof yet that he was not—he had a right to ask her to meet him anywhere. His eyes were fixed upon her face, and their troubled scrutiny read something of what was passing in her mind.

"Will you?" he persisted.

She gave him a sign of assent, chill and slight, then rose and left him.

CHAPTER XIII

ELEVEN o'clock, half-past eleven! Lights were out in corridor and hall, doors were locked and bolted, windows barred, fires dying. Philip had carried the key-basket to his room and now all was still. Helen lay back in the rocking-chair in her bedroom, schooling herself to self-control and common sense. She had heard, as she lingered at the top of the staircase, a quiet remark in Carstairs' voice: "I'll stay up a bit, if you don't mind, Beresford. I'm a bad sleeper and I want a cigarette and a long read." And if the remembrance of his voice, the thought of the quiet figure waiting for her in the firelight below had power to shake her as she was shaken now, she had clearly better postpone the interview till she had fought down her agitation and attained something like calmness.

The calmness seemed long in coming, nay, with every moment of dread and anticipation it was farther off. Nothing was to be gained by waiting and all was still. Helen rose suddenly.

"I must go now," she told herself with white lips, "or I shall not be able to go at all."

She had her hand on the door when it opened softly. Anita in her pale blue gown, with all her fair hair tumbling about her shoulders, met her face to face.

"Nell, not undressed!" in profound astonishment; "why, it is midnight! I came to see if you were asleep, petsie," slipping a coaxing arm about her waist. "I was afraid you were—crying, perhaps!"

"Crying!" echoed Helen blankly. "What about?"

"Oh, I don't know! Are you going to make it up with Major Carstairs?"

"Make what up? I don't understand you, Nan."

"He—was talking to you to-night. I saw him."

"Of course. Is there any reason why he shouldn't?"

"Now, Nell, don't! What was it all about?"

"What is all what about? He hardly spoke half a dozen words to me altogether. I—don't know what you are fancying, Nan. He said very little."

"It looked a good deal to me, judging from your face, ducksie. However, I'm not going to coax confidences out of you if you don't want to offer them. Only you always have told me everything before, and it's a little too bad, when things look really interesting, to be shut out in the cold in this way."

"How—look really interesting! What *do* you mean, Nan?"

"Oh, go to bed," laughed Nan, giving her a little shake. "Wait till I get a secret! I won't tell you if I die of it."

Helen was left with hurrying breath and blazing eyes, but the second agitation had calmed the first, as an outward blister will relieve an internal inflammation. If she could have gone down now! But she dare not. If Anita should hear!—should come back! The minutes passed slowly, slowly, the big clock in the hall struck twelve sonorous strokes. Fifteen minutes later a figure glided silently down the broad staircase. A moment later she pushed open the drawing-room door and walked up the long room, erect and steady.

"Shall I light the candles?"

"Not for me."

The cool matter-of-fact question helped her wonderfully. Carstairs looked at her sharply. He saw something of what the struggle for self-control had been, and he also saw that he could trust her to go through the coming interview with composure. He could have blessed her for it. It would be difficult enough for him without tragedy and tears to make it intolerable. He picked with nicety and discrimination one or two pieces of wood from the woodbasket, piled them skilfully on the dull bank of dying coals, and watched in absorbed silence for some few minutes the leaping tongues of flame lick round them, then he turned.

"Miss Thorneycroft, I have something to tell you."

"So you—implied."

"I have been to Madeira."

"Yes."

She leant forward eagerly, her eyes shining and wide. He set his teeth on his lower lip a moment. How desperately her fetters must gall her, to make her look like that! How passionately dear to her must her freedom be, when even the fear

that it might be jeopardised could bring that strained, almost terrible anxiety to her eyes! And when she learnt, as she must learn, that it was lost for ever! That he had filched from her, by a mean trick, what a proud woman may resign, but will never be deprived of—her liberty! He looked away and went doggedly on.

"Miss Thorneycroft, my wife is dead."

"Dead! You mean—that she was really drowned—in May—as we were told first——?"

He studied her sombrely. Was she suspecting him of still further meanness, as he acknowledged, with a hot shame smarting at his heart, she had every right?

"Please—try and be just," he said hoarsely. "I—I am to blame in many ways, but—but there are some things I couldn't do. When I told you my wife was alive it was true. I don't ask you to take my word for it unsupported, Andrews will tell you so. She was in Madeira when I said she was—but she was ill and I was not aware of it. They had suffered exposure and hardship at sea, and it—hastened matters. She broke a blood-vessel and died suddenly—in Madeira. I—I must ask you to believe that I am speaking the truth."

Did she? He hardly dare look to decide his own question, so imperative was it that she should. The tightness at his heart slackened suddenly: she sat shocked, startled, whitely silent, but not incredulous.

"When?" she asked almost inaudibly.

He hesitated. Had her quick intellect grasped at once the crux of the situation, or was her question dictated simply by a wish for further details? It had to be told; it might as well be told now.

"On September 12. The day we——"

Helen rose suddenly, one quick hand pushing back on its casters the little chair she had been sitting in.

"Then—then——"

Carstairs watched her as her unconscious shrinking gradually widened the distance between them. He had had a good many painful moments lately, but not one so painful as this. He steeled himself to answer quietly:

"The ceremony is legal? Yes."

For some few moments the room was terribly silent. Then he became conscious of the crackling of the wood fire and his own difficult breathing, but Helen stood white and still as stone. He broke the intolerable pause.

"I am sorry," he said hoarsely; "I can never hope to make you understand how sorry. I am ready to do anything, bear anything, to release you from the consequences of my own abominable behaviour. What excuse is possible I offer for myself, that I never anticipated a development of this kind. I never realised that I was running even the risk of it. My wife was alive and in her usual health for all I knew to the contrary; I could not foresee that she would die suddenly one day too early. But there is one chance. A marriage of this sort may not stand. If the facts are laid before the proper authorities it may be possible to get it—annulled. Don't do me the injustice to imagine that I shall think of myself now. Your release must be the first consideration. I am willing—*anxious*—to face everything."

Helen silenced his quick sentences with a movement of her hand.

"You seem to forget," she said, speaking with difficulty and very low, "that if my fear of publicity was strong enough to drive me into accepting your terms before, it is not likely to be any less strong now. You may be ready to face things—I can't."

"But—for your own sake," he urged. "Think what it means if we do not take prompt and active measures."

"I know what it means—for both of us, but what I could not face before I cannot face now—even for my own freedom. I know that I am condemning you as well as myself."

"*I beg* you will not consider me."

"But I do consider you. I am sorry for the false position in which you have placed yourself."

He dropped his forehead on his hand a moment.

"You are generous," he said with a white smile, "and—it hurts."

"I have no wish to be too generous. I would repeat that,

whatever the difficulties of the position may be, you have brought them on yourself. I have not."

"Do you think I don't know that?"

"I think you ought to know it. I am sorry to be compelled to refuse to take measures that are as necessary to your happiness as to mine."

"You do not really *think* I was considering my own happiness!"

"The fact remains, whether you were considering it or not. But, as I said before, the motives that were strong enough to drive me into this position are strong enough to keep me there. Besides, you are not really any more anxious for publicity than I am. You have Mrs. Colquhoun to think of—exactly as you had before."

"But not before you! I cannot, to avoid suffering for her, inflict misery upon you."

"Major Carstairs, the troubles we can keep to ourselves are bearable. It is only when we are called upon to endure the contemptuous pity of the general, that, to my mind, misery begins. You will not bring it upon me, even to free yourself."

"To free myself is the last thing I think of," he said passionately. "What a selfish contemptible brute you think me!"

"I did not—always."

"But lately you have had reason. Good heavens, don't you think I know it? Miss Thorneycroft, there is another way. If this is the vital matter to you that it is to me you will agree to it, though it is stretching a point a little. I don't know the hour when my wife died. I didn't ask, I daren't. There will probably be no record of it; I don't suppose they do that sort of thing in Portugal with the accuracy to which we are accustomed at home. The woman in whose cottage she died is poor, miserably poor. For money she will swear anything; no Catholic, in my experience, has our Puritan regard for truth. If I offer her something, and suggest to her that my wife died in the afternoon—an hour or two after—we were together—in Trentborough?"

But Helen silenced him with dignity.

"Major Carstairs, do you realise what you are proposing?"

"I realise it much better than you do. It is the very whitest of white lies. What does it matter to any one except us when she died! What would come of such an affirmation but good? It is one way out. Will you take it?"

"No."

"Not to free yourself?"

"Not for anything."

He looked at her a moment from under brows frowning with perplexity and pain. Then his heart began to beat hard and fast. Was it possible the position was not—to her—quite what he had imagined it? that she found her chains, once they were fairly on, less weighty than she had anticipated? The idea, faint though it was, took his breath away with its rush of staggering possibilities. His eyes shone a little, though his words laboured.

"Let us understand one another clearly," he said huskily. "If—if I am to be permitted to conclude that the position, though not one you would have chosen, is—is—one you can bring yourself to, at least, endure."

But Helen turned on him with blazing eyes.

"Major Carstairs," she said, a passionate thrill, a razor edge of scorn in her low tones, "if by cutting off my right hand I could regain what seems to me at this moment the best thing that life holds, my freedom from you, I would cut it off here and now. But not even to regain my freedom from you will I bribe a simple soul to perjury. *I wonder* at your readiness."

"To add yet another to my list of crimes? I would do anything—for you. I mean to release you," he added quickly.

"Pray don't trouble yourself to explain too clearly," with an icy smile, "I know exactly what you mean. But two wrongs don't make a right! I would wish to be just. I see, indeed I do, that the situation, for which, after all, you are not entirely to blame, is a painful one for you—especially here—and now——"

"You are referring to what I told you—about Mrs. Colquhoun?"

"Yes!" her tone very low.

"Please do not lay too much stress upon that!" looking steadily down.

Helen stared at him one breathless moment. Was it possible that he was considering his duty towards her—as a husband?

"But I lay every stress upon it. It must—make things worse—for you, even if she can never be anything to you, and you know it. But even though I know that I cannot do as you propose, there are other ways, Major Carstairs."

He looked at her sharply. What "other ways" was she alluding to? There were some that had dawned upon his own mind, but they were hardly likely to have occurred to her. He leaned his elbows on the mantelpiece and hid his face on his hands a moment.

"I wish," he said almost brokenly, "you had taken it a little differently, it would have been easier for me. If it was your wish to punish me as cruelly as possible, you may thank your ingenuity for—showing you how to do it. If you would be—a bit harder upon me—if you would say to me—some of the things I deserve to hear."

"I have no wish to be hard upon you, Major Carstairs. Circumstances are hard enough upon both of us."

"And what would you have me do? We must do something!"

"I would have you go again to Madeira and find out the truth. By the truth we must abide, both of us, however painful it may be. It is possible that the future may open for one of us a way of escape, but for the present—I forgot! You are going back to Burmah!"

"I have applied for an extension of leave."

"And if you get it you will go to Madeira?"

"Yes, Miss Thorneycroft," turning suddenly upon her a face so white and set it was hardly recognisable. "I have done you a grievous wrong, but, as God is above us, I will sacrifice career, reputation, life if need be, but I will—will wipe it out. Do you believe me?"

A narrow band of light cut the shadows at the lower end of the room. It broadened slowly, and in the doorway stood a

lank figure in a crimson dressing-gown, candle in hand—Philip. He stared a moment at the pair before him in blank bewilderment.

"I—I—b—b—beg your pardon!" he stammered and went.

CHAPTER XIV

DAWN found Helen still wide-eyed and wakeful, divided between a weary disinclination to lie where she was and think any longer, and a weary distaste to get up and face the difficulties of the day. And with the daylight, as is so often the case, came the blessed sleep that night had denied her. Her eyes were closing, the lines of her face softening, her breath coming deep and regular at last, when a sound, a soft little scraping sound, roused her, a bit of white paper was coming under her bedroom door. The girl sprang out of bed and seized it. It was a note from Philip.

"I want to speak to you *before* breakfast. Will you dress and come into Anita's room?—P. B."

Helen stood a moment straight and white and still. *What* had he heard? How much did he know? She dressed rapidly. That was a point that must be settled—and soon.

He was waiting for her when she went into the room, the pretty octagon room, with its windows giving a wide view of an ultramarine sea, over which the white horses were racing madly, joyously, flinging the wreaths of spray from their crests and filling all the October morning with a sense of delicious tumult. He looked worn and anxious and as if he had not slept either.

"Anita is asleep," he said quickly, "and she couldn't hear if she were not. Nell, what is all this—between you and Major Carstairs?"

Helen was silent. She had too much respect for both herself and Philip to take refuge in pretence or evasion—and the truth was impossible.

Philip went on a little hurriedly.

"I daresay you think I have no right to question you, to

interfere at all, but think a little. I find you alone with him—at one o'clock in the morning when every one else is in bed. I—didn't come down with—with any sort of suspicion in my mind. I was afraid he might not have left all safe below, I'm nervous about fire as you know, and he's an absent-minded fellow sometimes. As I came out of the smoke-room I heard voices in the drawing-room, and it was natural that I should look to see who was there. I won't say how astonished I was to see you. I—I pass over that part of the matter altogether, I've—I've no doubt you were doing what you thought was right—but—but——”

“Have you told Anita?”

In spite of her knowledge of her own utter integrity, the question was shame-faced and her eyes would not meet his. The person who is only suspected often looks more guilty than the thief.

“I've told no one,” with quick reassurance, “but—there's a good deal I want you to tell me. What does it all mean, Nell? You don't deny it means something?”

“It would be useless—after last night. Major Carstairs and I have quarrelled, Philip,” with a desperate effort after frankness. “I have reason, good reason, to be—offended with him, but it is not a matter in which you can interfere.”

“And your quarrel obliges you to meet him alone—at one o'clock in the morning! I'm—I'm not blaming or reproaching you, Nell, I want to get at the truth.”

Helen's head rose.

“It was—unusual, but I am not aware that I have done anything wrong. He was anxious to speak to me alone, he came on purpose. It is no worse, to my thinking, to speak to him in the drawing-room alone at one o'clock than at ten. If it had been ten you would have had nothing to say.”

“Of course not, but that isn't—everything. I heard him say that he had done you a grievous wrong. A grievous wrong!—those were his own words, and that he would sacrifice reputation, career, life itself, but he would atone for it.”

Helen sat whitely silent. Had he indeed heard all that? Philip shot a quick distressed look at her and went on, his eyes

fixed steadily on the pencil in his fingers, his words peculiarly deliberate, every one well weighed.

"A man doesn't say that sort of thing for nothing, Nell. You tell me it is not a matter in which I can interfere, but there is one thing I must know. Is he a fellow I can meet at breakfast this morning and shake hands with, or does he deserve kicking from here to York? For, by Jove, if he does I'll do the kicking!"

For a moment Helen stared at him with wide, bright, bewildered eyes. Then the red and white chased one another rapidly across her changing face and she rose suddenly.

"Philip, how *dare* you!"

He had met her wondering look fair and straight, his troubled eyes searching distressedly into the depths of hers. The dark colour rose slowly in his face at the passionate indignation in her voice.

"My dear girl," he said, "I heard what I told you. What was I to think?"

"You need not have thought—what you imply. Because Major Carstairs and I choose to do what is perhaps a little unusual is no reason why you should offer us both the deadliest of insults. Major Carstairs has wronged me, yes, it is true, but not as cruelly as you have. You will beg my pardon here and now!" And Minerva ere she hurled the thunderbolts of Jove never quivered with righteous anger as Helen quivered then, never towered before an offending mortal more the wrathful goddess than Helen did now. "If you did as you ought you would beg his too."

"I'm very glad to hear it," a little drily, "and I'm better pleased than I can tell you to see you so gloriously angry. But I had reason, Nell, in your cooler moments you will acknowledge it, and I'm the only brother you have got, you know."

"There is one thing you can do to—to make it up to me—a little!"—and now she was the offended empress offering terms. "Keep all this to yourself, Philip. I will tell you what it means as I am able. At present no one can do anything but me. Major Carstairs is to blame, yes, a little!" She was

sincere, though it was certainly the first time she had thought it a little. "But he has brought upon himself his own punishment. I must beg you not to interfere in any way and to let the whole thing rest between our two selves. Will you, Philip?"

"I suppose I shall have to, if you insist upon it, and give me your word that things are—different from what they look. But it's not an easy thing to meet—as a guest——"

"Philip, *don't!* You are misjudging him."

"I—hope so."

"You are. Oh, let things alone, Philip, you will do such incalculable mischief——"

"Well, for your sake! And you'll tell me—what it all means as you are able, you promise!"

"I promise."

"And you are not unhappy?"

"I am not nearly so unhappy as I shall be if you won't do as I ask you."

"Nell, that's an evasion."

"Very well then, I *am* unhappy, I'm miserable, but you can't help me. And it's not Major Carstairs' fault—not altogether."

"Nell," laying an appealing hand on her arm as she would have left him, "are you fond of the fellow?"

"No, I'm not, I hate him! But—I promised to tell you the truth as far as I could, didn't I?—if things had been different—I should have been."

"She *is*," Philip told himself with conviction.

It was more than a little odd to meet them at breakfast half an hour later. In spite of himself he found himself studying both of them more closely than he would have wished, and a wondering admiration for them rewarded him. They smiled, they talked, they even talked to one another sufficiently to avoid comment. Philip was just a little nonplussed.

"Carstairs is a man of the world," he told himself; "he can carry things off, of course, but I wouldn't have expected such coolness, such aplomb from Helen. She is a splendid girl. Poor Nell, what does it all mean, I wonder? And she says he has brought his punishment on his own head. I wonder how! I wonder what it is!"

Whatever it was it sat there very lightly; it was almost a pity Helen did not know how lightly, for Carstairs was finding the shackles from which she was so reluctantly compelled to acknowledge herself unable to free him surprisingly easy. More, the recollection of them, and of the fact that she wore them too, was beginning to send a little ripple of exultation over his consciousness every now and then of which, to do him justice, he was heartily ashamed. It appealed to the lower self in him and he knew it, but every man has a lower self, and the man to be truly revered is the man who can put his foot on his lower self and keep it there. Therefore Carstairs blushed at a secret pleasure he was beginning to be unable to deny, and smothered it sternly when he could. It was not always that he could. It would come surging up in his heart sometimes when he least expected it, and bring a satisfaction to his lip and a light to his eyes quite beyond his power of control. The remembrance of which things would set him to grimmer planning still as to how he could best free himself—and her—from the chains he was beginning to hug.

If only he could free—not himself, that was beginning not to matter, but her. If he could hope by some sort of satisfaction, some as yet undiscovered atonement, to sweep away the bitter memories between them and find himself where he had been with her the first few days of his last visit, before the stress and heartburnings of the later half of it had, while it locked their hands, sundered their hearts utterly and irrevocably!

Philip, not to be outdone in coolness, was gayer than usual, telling one funny story after another with a dryness and brevity Carstairs would hardly have expected from him. He found himself glancing across the table more than once for the quick look of understanding, appreciation, sympathy from Miss Thorneycroft that would have been his so surely in the days before—before he threw away the right to call himself her friend. If she had known how he hungered and thirsted for it would she still have denied him? If she had known how it hurt him would she still have met his longing look with cold eyes and impassive face, lavishing the bright and laughing play of lip and eye and intellect on others to whom it was as

nothing? He glanced with eyes restless and a little haggard from her to Edith Colquhoun, to whom her husband was laboriously explaining in an undertone where the jokes came in. He frowned suddenly, bending questioning eyes upon his plate. He had known always, of course, that his idol had no sense of humour, it would have been a sort of profanity to expect it from her. She was, in truth, though he did not know that, an idol and very little more. But surely she had not always been so painfully literal! He silenced his own thoughts, they were traitorous. She had always, to him, meant all that is perfect, and a man is difficult to please who wants more. He had still to realise that occasionally a man is more than contented with less.

Helen left the breakfast-room the moment the meal was over. Philip followed her out on to the steps, and his were not the only pair of eyes that rested with more than contentment on the slender, upright figure that stood, every well-moulded limb indicated by the close fit of her blue cloth dress, the sun glinting down on her burnished head and adding a deeper flush to the wild-rose bloom of her cheeks. She whistled as Philip watched her, whistled clear and shrill, a masculine accomplishment he was by no means sure he admired.

"Where are you going, Nell?" he asked.

"Out," said Nell laconically, and then, feeling she had been a little ungracious, "I want Nero, he's company."

"I expect he's chained up, poor brute; Anita's afraid of him!"

"They'll slip him in a moment, he'll see to that when he hears me," with a smile, and as she spoke a deep-mouthed baying woke the echoes of the stable-yard, and a moment later a huge dog, half-mastiff, half-bloodhound, rushed like a whirlwind up the steps and flung himself in exuberant devotion upon Helen. She twisted a slim strong hand in his brass-studded collar and forced him on to his haunches, where he sat, his deep chest panting, a red tongue lolling out sideways, awaiting with watchful, adoring eyes the first chance for more boisterous caresses.

"Be still, sir," admonished Helen, shaking a comely head, "or I won't take you."

"Take him where?"

"Oh, along the sands somewhere."

"There's one thing I must know before you go," dropping his voice uncomfortably, "am I to repeat my invitation of last night, I mean to Carstairs? Am I to ask the fellow—here again?"

"Why, of course," with wide eyes, "if you wish to."

"It isn't what I wish—it's what you wish."

"My dear Philip, I don't care one brass button whether he comes or he doesn't."

"But, Nell, I'm very uneasy. I wish I knew the truth."

"I hope you never may!" with passionate emphasis.

Philip studied her sombrely a moment.

"There," he said slowly, "there's a thing to say. I don't know *what* to think and that's the truth, Nell."

"Then don't think anything."

"It's all very well to offer an easy solution of that kind, but—it's nonsense. I ought to know what all this means, I really *ought*. However, I've promised, and for the present I will be guided by you. What do you really wish me to do?"

"Exactly and precisely as you please!" and with a mocking little curtsy and a laughing look at his mystified, half-angry face, Helen ran down the steps and left him. Her face changed suddenly as the gate in the wall leading on to the cliff top clanged behind her. She had come out ostensibly to think over the difficulties of her position, but now she was out thought seemed, if possible, the one thing to be avoided. She chose deliberately the most difficult path down the cliff she knew of, a descent that forced her to move warily and tread cautiously, lest she should precipitate herself headlong on to the very uninviting bed of thickly strewn boulders that was awaiting her at the bottom. Once over them on the smooth and shining sands, she put her head down and breasted the friendly buffetings of the steady wind, that sang ocean lyrics in her ears one minute and wantonly essayed to stay her steps by vicious flutterings of her skirts about her ankles the next. A mile or two of such pedestrian exercise tells; even Nero, tired of mad and futile ruslings to and fro, paced soberly along beside her during the

third, and Helen herself was not sorry to see a spire of rock rising from its bed of pools, shells, and olive-coloured weeds, not far before her. There was a cranny on its leeward side she wotted of, and there, partially sheltered from the rude caresses of the sea breezes, Helen disposed her slim self, a patch of vivid colour against its brown side, her eyes fixed almost joyously on the glorious expanse of leaping blue and white before her.

The sands were absolutely deserted. Nero, lazily rolling with his blunt nose an unhappy crab, too small to pinch him, over and over on the sand, and herself were everything alive save what was fishy and cold-blooded. A small white cottage had found foothold on the cliff behind her, and clung to its face half way up, a line of clothes fluttering behind it, a three-cornered patch of potatoes flourishing amazingly in front. Movement, save for the fluttering clothes and the dancing water, there was none.

She would not think, she *would* not. Thinking could alter nothing. All she could do was to endure what malicious fortune had been pleased to send her. Yet one question, despite all her efforts to numb her brain, blindfold her mental vision, gag her honesty, cried aloud for answer. Why did she shrink so passionately from any hint of the truth reaching Philip? The girl's face set curiously as she sat, her slim hands clasped about her knees, her eyes wide and fixed before her.

"I'll tell myself the truth for once and have done," borrowing unconsciously from the vernacular in the stress of her thoughts, "my own share in what has happened I would tell frankly, but *his*! I would not have Philip know how he has disgraced himself, not for all the world! I don't know quite why I care to shield him, but I do! They shall *never* know! I would die first."

There was another little wonderment that stirred uneasily at the bottom of her consciousness every now and then. But it had not yet presented itself in the light of a question that must be answered. Why did her pity and regret gather first about Major Carstairs, tied, albeit by his own wicked folly, to a wife he had never desired, and find that the fact that she was sacrificed, an innocent victim, to a man she could only despise

a secondary matter? Truly her pride smarted under the humiliation of the position, but was it all smarting pride?

"Do you think you are quite safe here?"

She started as the quiet question came out of the breezy silences, and the vexed colour rose in her cheek. Did he think his anomalous position required that he should subject her to this most unwelcome solicitude? She struggled a moment with the sharp temptation to tell him that she was accustomed to and quite capable of taking care of herself, but her natural courtesy stayed her.

"I'm quite safe, thank you."

"But the tide has turned. Did you know?"

For a moment her lip curled.

"Have you come to tell me so, Major Carstairs?"

"I have," he answered gravely.

Miss Thorneycroft moved an impatient shoulder, very slightly, but he saw it.

"I must ask you, please," she said very low, "not to entertain the idea that you are in any way bound to take care of me. It is altogether unnecessary—and intensely unpleasant. You will be good enough, in future, to be guided entirely by your inclinations. That you should sacrifice yourself to a mistaken idea of duty after this fashion is, frankly, intolerable."

She was a little above him as he stood beside her pressing a pebble viciously into the wet sand with his toe. He spoke without looking up.

"Will you kindly be a little more explicit? I should like to know in what way I have done violence to my inclinations."

"Major Carstairs," with icy frankness, "I think it a pity you should waste the time you might spend more pleasantly—in—unnecessary attendance upon me."

There was a sudden flash behind his lowered eyelids, though his face was quite impassive. Was she alluding again to Edith Colquhoun? Helen looked straight before her, angry and still. He spoke presently, a slight though rather bitter smile playing about his lips.

"It's a little new for you to give me credit for virtues that I don't possess. I assure you that I am as frankly selfish

to-day as ever. I came because I wanted to come, and for no other reason."

Helen turned on him a white face and flashing eyes.

"I must ask you to spare me such speeches," she said, her breath coming quickly. "They are not in the bond."

"What is in the bond?" he asked.

"That we should accept the situation, and never by thought or word or deed allude to it. You know it as well as I do, and it is like you to choose to forget it."

"I didn't forget it—but there are other points to settle. Is there never to be any question of—of condoning a bitterly repented fault?—of forgiveness, however remote? I'm a bold man to suggest it, am I not?" staring sombrely before him.

"Major Carstairs, it is impossible!" too genuinely astonished to be angry. "You know it, you have always known it."

"Yes, but I didn't know how desperately it was going to matter!" through his shut teeth. "Helen," laying his hand on the rock beside her and looking up with an almost agonised appeal in his eyes, "you must, you shall forgive me. I will take myself out of your life, I will undo, by all I ever held holy I will, the injury I have done, but you shall once, just once, forget, look at me as you used to look——"

The slow scorn in her eyes froze the passionate words upon his tongue.

"You take advantage of circumstances once again, sir! I am, unfortunately"—with a glance at the depth of the leap between her perch and the ground—"compelled to sit and listen to you."

He started and stepped back.

"You won't forget the tide is flowing," he said hoarsely.

"Thank you, I know the coast."

She did, but not quite so well as she thought, neither did she know that it was the time of the spring tides. Perhaps but for her exasperation at Major Carstairs' anxiety for her safety, but for the fear that, should she turn her head, she might still catch sight of him somewhere, she might have taken steps to assure herself that she was as absolutely secure as she imagined. As it was she sat motionless and indignant, her eyes fixed on the

heaving horizon line, a good deal longer than she had any idea of. And by-and-by Nero began to run restlessly backwards and forwards behind her, then he came sniffing about the base of the rock she sat on, his eyes filled with doggy adoration and a good deal of uneasiness. Finally he lifted up his voice in that ear-piercing yelp, half-gape, half-howl, that in a dog betokens acute distress of mind. Helen turned and scrambled down from the ledge in a most undignified hurry. The treacherous water had surrounded her as she sat absorbed in thought, and a noble river five yards wide was flowing strongly between her and safety. She picked up a stone, the biggest within reach. It struck the water with a disconcerting "plop."

"It's three feet deep, quite," said Helen with a gasp.

She wasted precious moments searching for a shallower passage, but in vain, and with skirts kilted high was just about to make a desperate plunge through the flood towards dry ground, when the sight of some one coming over the sands towards her stayed her. The gait was unfamiliar, graceful progression across deep and yielding sand in a pair of fisherman's boots reaching to one's middle is a physical impossibility, but the head and shoulders were unmistakable. To run the risk of being swept off her feet and ignominiously "ducked" before him! Never! It was easier to wait till he should reach and rescue her, though that, after her all-too confident contempt for his warnings, her reiterated assurances that she was more than able to take care of herself, was bitter enough. He came deliberately through the water, and, though he was taller than the ordinary, his high boots, as he waded out to her side, were glistening to his thighs.

"Clutterbuck is away with the herring fleet or I would have sent him," he said curtly. "As it was I borrowed his boots and came myself. I'm afraid you will have to let me carry you."

If she had accepted at once, as she ought to have done, it would have been comparatively easy, but the very thought of his arms about her sent every drop of blood with a shock to her heart. She shrank undeniably.

"I'll walk through, thank you."

"You can't possibly in those absurd petticoat things. The bottom is rough and stony, and the water as much as I can stand against. I must ask you, please, not to be silly," with a steady quiet that hid a considerable amount of fury, "every second is making things worse."

There was a moment's intense quiet. If only she had yielded at first, now she did not know how. He spoke again.

"If you wait much longer I shall have to swim it, and that won't be pleasant for either of us, besides"—with the touch of whimsicality that showed in him sometimes—"poor Clutterbuck would lose his boots. Miss Thorneycroft," suddenly losing patience, "you don't mean to say you would rather stay here till six to-night than trust yourself to me for one moment. I daresay we shouldn't drown, but it will be uncommonly cold and disagreeable." Then enlightened by something in her face: "I should stay too, of course."

Six hours alone with him, with that waste of waters all about, probably partly over them! It was too awful! He caught the added horror in her eye and the next moment she was swung high in his arms.

"Of two evils," he said, laughing grimly. "It was an awe-inspiring prospect, wasn't it? Even this is better." And then the difficulties of his task absorbed him, and he was silent perforce.

He carried her over slowly and deliberately, Nero swimming beside him. Perhaps caution was necessary, but it certainly struck Helen that he did not hurry himself. His breath was coming short and quick as he set her lightly down in safety, but Miss Thorneycroft's weight, eight stone, was not entirely responsible for it. Then he busied himself, gravely and without apology, in helping her to wring the water from her skirts where they had touched the surface, for to have brought her over so nearly dryshod was a feat in itself. Helen felt it incumbent on her to say something.

"I didn't know you knew Clutterbuck!"

"Oh, I generally get to know folks."

"I suppose I ought to say thank you, Major Carstairs."

"Not at all," with a shade of hurry. "You would infinitely rather I hadn't, you know." And then he raised his cap and made his way over the sands again, the water oozing out of Clutterbuck's boots at every step, the little thrill of exultation he had felt called upon to fight down once or twice before dancing in his veins again.

"I've held her in my arms—once," he told himself, a gleam in his eye, a grim satisfaction about his lips that was new. "She can't alter that—either."

(To be continued.)

OXFORD AND HER COLLEGES

X.—EXETER

ONE of the most noticeable things in the early history of an English college is its restricted character. Sometimes the restriction is personal, and "Founder's Kin" are preferred above other less fortunate students: sometimes it is local, and a diocese, a county, or even a city has opportunities denied to its neighbours. Such restrictions have long afforded a fine expanse of target for professed reformers, the most Winkle-like of whom can hardly miss so massive a haystack; and, indeed, with the great development of communications which has brought Plymouth and Newcastle nearer together than once were Southampton and Poole, the restrictions have lost much of their reason and value. But in earlier times the case was different. Politically, indeed, England was a kingdom, in which—since the death of Siward of Northumbria, at any rate—the king's writs have run north as well as south of the Humber; but socially she was still "a geographical expression," a mere collection of shires and provinces, the inhabitants of any one of which were ignorant and yet jealous of the rest, and therefore ready to quarrel with any of their neighbours on any provocation. To collect men from so scattered a kingdom into one central university was like turning red ants and black ants loose into the same saucer. Fight they would and must—Yorkshire with Lancashire, Devon with Somerset, South with North—till some pious founder bethought him of a way of peace, and sorted out one section of the population to be penned up within a little enclosure which he named a college.

One of the earliest of these was Exeter, or rather, "Stapeldon Hall," as it was at first called. At the beginning of the fourteenth century Walter de Stapeldon, Bishop of Exeter and Lord High Treasurer of England, gave lands and houses for the support of twelve poor scholars "studying philosophy in the

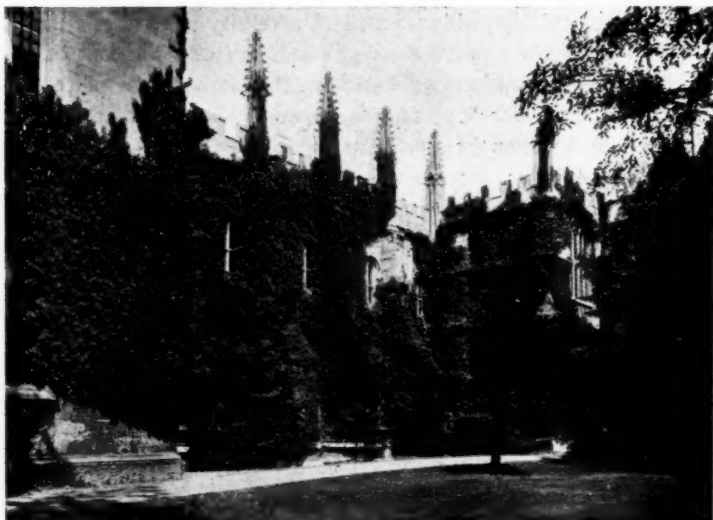
town of Oxeneford," eight of whom were to be natives or residents of Devon and four of Cornwall, while the chaplain was to be appointed by the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral, and would therefore, like the rest, be from the Exeter diocese. From that time to the University Commission of 1854 the connection between Stapeldon's foundation and the West Country was maintained unbroken, for nearly all the most distinguished Devonians and Cornubians in the University were at one time or another Fellows of the College; and even in the last half-century the institution of Stapeldon Scholarships in place of the original Fellowships has, for undergraduates at any rate, strengthened rather than weakened the old tie. Thus the words of Thomas Fuller, though written when Charles II. was king, still hold good; for now as ever, while New College and Queen's are the resorts of Southerners and Northerners respectively, "Exeter is the most proper for Western men."

The truth of this appears both in fact and fiction. Until half a century ago, if one comes across any West-country name in Oxford annals, it is rarely indeed that its owner hails from any other college. Hither came the sons and brothers of those Elizabethan seamen the story of whose deeds is, in Mr. Froude's words, "the prose epic of the English nation"—Fortescues and Gilberts, Careys and Stukeleys, Grenvilles and Denyses. Hither too came the scholars and statesmen of a later age—Petres, Prideaux, Aclands, Conants. And it was by past and present members of Exeter that both the Royalist and the Parliamentary forces in the west were led and officered in the Civil War. At the Battle of Lansdown there fell many of the leaders of Hopton's famous Cornish army, amongst them—

"Grenville, Godolphin, Trevanion, Slanning slain,
The four wheels of Charles's wain,"

as an old rhyme recalls; and of these four wheels, without which Charles's wain, like the chariots of Pharaoh, drave heavily, all but the last had been commoners of the college. Sir John Arundel and Digory Polwhele, who held Pendennis Castle for the King, and two Champernownes who were killed in

Hopton's march, had also drunk the toast "Floreath Exon"; while among the staunchest adherents of the Parliamentary cause were Exonians like Sir John Eliot, John Blackmore (who enjoyed the almost unique honour of being knighted by Cromwell), and the Puritan dandy Lord Wharton. Many



EXETER COLLEGE: THE GARDEN

Cornish names are also to be found on the roll—Iagos and Jagos, Vyvyans and Vyvians and Vivians, Trelawneys, Polmorvas and Pendarvises—who recall the old proverb which records that

"By Tre and Pol and Pen
You may know the Cornish men."

Fiction, the "spiritualised essence of fact," tells the same story. Every schoolboy knows—and I make the assertion with no less confidence, and perhaps more ground for it than Lord Macaulay had in the case of the executioner of Atahualpa—every schoolboy knows that that "most delicate and flawless crystal," as Gloriana termed Frank Leigh, the elder

brother of Amyas, was a commoner of the college in the days before he became a man of travel and of courts; and that Vindex Brimblecombe qualified himself for the wielding of the ferula, as his son Jack did afterwards for the curacy of Hartland, by the statutory years of servitorship in the same founda-



EXETER COLLEGE: THE GARDEN

tion. Every schoolboy ought *not* to know—though it is to be feared that nowadays the literary provender of “the young person” is not so carefully inspected as it was in Mr. Podsnap’s household—that the repentant sinner in “Tom Jones” who goes by the name of “The Solitary” or “The Man of the Hill,” and tells the story of his debaucheries with something of the enjoyment of the reformed rake, was also here as an undergraduate about a century later than the Bidefordians of “Westward Ho.” Morals and discipline were alike lax at that time, and Sir George Gresham and his set lived “as wicked and as profligate a life” as any man-about-town of the Regency. They raced, they Mohocked, they gambled, they drank, they

did many other things which are even less fit to be related, and nobody seems to have heeded or cared ; till the sacred rights of property were invaded, and the narrator made free with the guineas of his "chum"¹ or room-mate. Then there was hue-and-cry enough, and Oxford and Exeter cast him forth to do and fare even worse in London. The anonymous penitent was also a West-countryman, as was Fielding his creator, and the story bears all the marks of being true in substance if not in the particulars. Henry Kingsley's "Ravenshoe" corroborates the novels already quoted, and few readers of that delightful story will forget the conversation opposite the University barge between the hero and "west-countryman of Exeter called Lee, who never met with Charles without having a turn at talking Devonshire with him. He began now at the top of his voice, to the great astonishment of the surrounding dandies.

"Where be gwine? Charles Ravenshoe, where be gwine?"

"We'm gwine for a ride on the watter, Jan Lee."

"Be gwine in the 'Varsity eight, Charles Ravenshoe?"

"Iss, sure."

"How do 'e feel? Don't 'e feel afeard?"

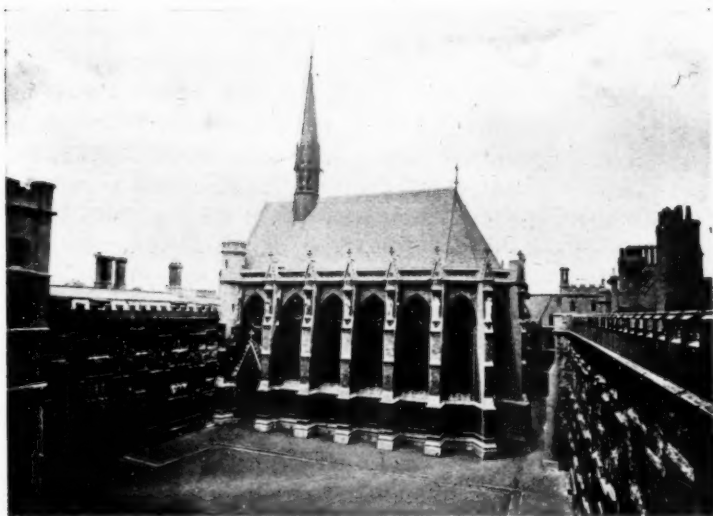
"Ma deer soul, I've got such a wambling in my innards, and——"

But here the Captain interposes, and the curtain falls.

The place held by a college in the University is not easy to determine, for colleges vary from generation to generation, and even from year to year. Exeter has had its ups and downs like the rest, but, on the whole, it has always stood high both numerically and socially—at any rate since the time of its "second Founder," Sir William Petre, one of the "new men" of the Tudor age. In the middle of the sixteenth century the total revenue of the college was considerably less than £100, and the Fellows received but £3 10s. a year. It is not surprising, therefore, to find very few names—in 1541 there were only four Masters of Arts—on the books. But Petre's benefactions more than doubled

¹ Said to be corrupted from *Chamberdekyngs*—those *in camera degentes*, or sharing chambers. The custom lasted till well on in the eighteenth century.

the revenues, and the new statutes which he drew up raised the standard of discipline and learning. From 1566, accordingly, the college entered on a period of prosperity, which lasted for nearly a century. The Doctors of that time—Glasier, Holland, Prideaux, Hakewill, Conant—were all strenuous men, and men,



EXETER COLLEGE: THE CHAPEL

too, who were distinguished in literature and theology as well as in administration, and under them the college prospered exceedingly. By the beginning of the seventeenth century it had over 200 members, and stood fifth in point of numbers in the University, for men were attracted by the fame of its tutors not only from the west, but from the middle and north of England, and even from Scotland and the Continent; so that under Prideaux, perhaps the greatest of this great line of rectors, if we may believe Antony Wood, "Exeter flourished more than any house in the University." John Conant, the last of the line, was Rector during the Commonwealth and Protectorate, and in those "halcyon days" raised the college to

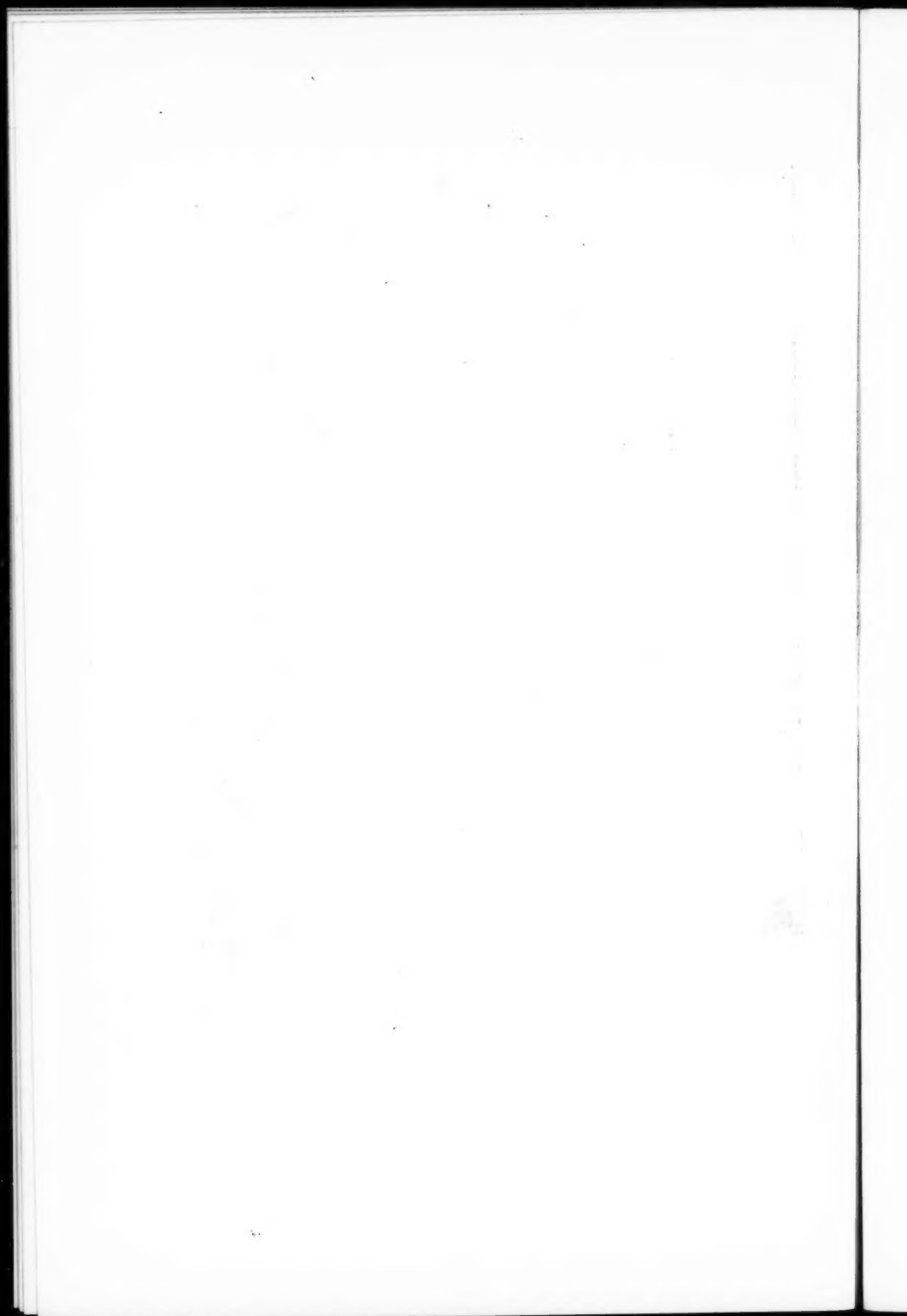
even greater heights. There was no room for the crowds that sought admission (for there were no "licensed lodging-houses" till after 1855), and in his time Exeter men were almost monopolising the chief posts in the University, and many "were transplanted hence to scholarships, fellowships, and headships of other colleges."

After Conant, however, there comes a sudden and marked decline for nearly another century (1662-1730), a decline which indeed was but a part and a symptom of the down-hill course of the whole University, but which was more evident in our college than elsewhere because of its former excellence: the higher the wall, the greater the fall. Wood writes in 1683 that "of Exeter College not one Bachelor was presented *ad determinandum*" (to take his degree), though "they use commonly to have twelve"; Dean Prideaux records that "all the while I was at Oxford I never knew anything in Exeter but drinking and duncing"; and from other contemporary notices we may gather that the college was notorious even in that licentious age for vice and immorality of all sorts. It was Rector Conybeare, afterwards Dean of Christ Church and Bishop of Bristol, who raised it once more from the mire and set it among the princes of the University—no very dizzy height, it must be confessed, in that somnolent eighteenth century, when, on fine summer evenings, "the Fellows would sit in a shady corner of the quad over their port and pipes from dinner to supper-time." Yet the distinction which some of these easy-going Fellows gained in literature, theology, Oriental studies, astronomy, medicine, botany, and natural science, did a good deal to redeem the fame of the college, and two families of kinsmen, the Rigauds and Demainbrays, several of whose members were at Exeter, had scientific knowledge and honours enough to furnish the new Museum.

In the nineteenth century the college gradually lost something of its provincial character, but remained very popular. Fifty years ago it was second in point of numbers in the University, being the only one, except Christ Church, with more than a hundred undergraduates; but Sir Charles Lyell, the geologist, and John Russell—the famous "Parson Jack" of Dartmoor—



EXETER COLLEGE: THE CHAPEL



who were up about 1816, found the West-country element very strong. "Most of the men," Lyell writes in one of his letters home, "come from Devon and Cornwall, who, of course, when they have taken their degree never think anything more of this part of the world." The remark is not complimentary to the men of the West, and is probably over-severe, but C. H. Pearson, the author of "National Life and Character," mentions that this was the reputation of Exeter in his time also, more than thirty years later; and he wonders how Charles Kingsley would have explained the "thickness" of the descendants and countrymen of his favourites Raleigh and Drake. There was a story in Lyell's time, probably truer in the spirit than in the letter, which illustrates the reputation for provincialism enjoyed by some of the less polished Exonians of that day throughout the University. One of these, being examined in divinity, was asked, "Who was Moses?"—"Moses?" he answered: "Knavs nothing about Moses, but ax me about St. Paul, *and there I has ye!*" This is perhaps the prototype of the immortal hero—not an Exeter man, by the way—who, having "got up" the answers to certain questions only, was constrained to reply to a request for some information on any four of the Minor Prophets that he would not presume to discuss these great and good men, but that he could fortunately supply the deficiency by reciting the kings of Israel and Judah.

I must conclude this sketch of one of the oldest, and perhaps the most individualistic, of Oxford colleges with some description of its buildings. Originally its local habitation was considerably to the east of its present position, and consisted of Hart Hall and Arthur Hall, which were on or near the site of the recently re-founded Hertford College. These, however, proved too small, even in Stapeldon's lifetime, and the foundation was soon removed to St. Stephen's Hall, which stood about where our Chapel now is. The territorial history of the next century and a half is a story of expansion. Crowded together over the parallelogram which is now bounded on the north and south by Broad Street and B. N. C. Lane, and on the east and west by

the Bodleian Library and Turl Street, were scattered a number of tiny mediæval tenements with little strips of garden or waste ground adjoining, and "Stapeldon Hall" became possessed of most of these, either by purchase or bequest. In some cases the original buildings were adapted to their new use as they stood, but in others they were pulled down, and new buildings were erected in their place. The first of these was the Chapel, which stood near the present Library, well to the eastward of the front quad; after being used as a Chapel for three centuries, it became the Library in Rector Hakewill's time, when a second Chapel was built on the present site. It was burnt out in 1709, patched up and re-fitted next year, and finally pulled down in 1778, when a new (Ionic) building was erected on the present site. The present (Gothic) Library dates, like a good deal of the rest of the college, from about 1855, when Sir Gilbert Scott designed the new Chapel, the Rector's Lodgings, and most of the inner quad. Only one piece of really old masonry survives, viz., "Palmer's Tower," which was built by William Palmer, physician to Margaret of Anjou, about 1432, as the main gate of the college. In those days the head of a college was usually its janitor, and kept the keys of the gate. The Hall seems always to have stood where it does now, though at first it ran north and south instead of east and west. The present one was built in 1618 by Sir John Acland, and is, in the Rector's words, "a good specimen of Jacobean architecture." On the screen at its lower end there is a carving of a man smoking a pipe, one of the earliest known representations of "the filthy habit" which James I. and the Duke of Wellington so scornfully reprobated.

The buildings, as the reader may have gathered, are not remarkable for their antiquity, their beauty, or even their associations, but the real glories of the college have not yet been mentioned. The first is the famous tapestry in the chapel, which was executed by the late William Morris from a black-and-white drawing by Burne-Jones, the life-long friend whom he met first at their matriculation in the college hall. It represents, as every visitor to Oxford knows, the Adoration of the Magi, and photographic reproductions of it are among the chief



EXETER COLLEGE: THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

commodities of the city. The other is perhaps not so well known, as it is inaccessible during the early part of the day—I mean the Fellows' Garden. You go through a darksome doorway in a corner of the front quad, and if you steer a true course between the Scylla of the Sub-Rector's staircase and the Charybdis of the Common-Room, you come out into the Elysian Fields. It is not of great extent, this academical paradise—only some eighty yards long and twenty broad; you might add such a strip to the gardens of St. John's or Worcester or New College without making any apparent change in those lordly domains. But it is, for its size, the most beautiful nook in Oxford—a paradise without a woman (except the occasional lady visitor) and without anything nearer to a serpent than the college tortoise, who is, indeed, a subtile reptile, but has no other Satanic characteristics except that he is always going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down on it.

One end of the oblong is formed by a block of buildings of the same age as the Hall (1620), the oldest except Palmer's Tower in the college; and along the walls, and climbing up to the topmost storey, stretches a gigantic fig-tree named after Dr. Kennicott, who loved its fruit rather well than wisely; for the story goes that once, when he had, as he hoped, secured for himself the enjoyment of a peculiarly promising specimen by attaching to its stem a label inscribed "Dr. Kennicott's fig," he found in the morning that only the label was left, and even it had been altered to read "A fig for Dr. Kennicott." Well, that is at the west end of the garden. Along the south side runs a high wall fringed and veiled with trees and shrubs, over which can be caught glimpses of Lincoln and B. N. C. across B. N. C. Lane. At the eastern end there runs a terrace, some ten feet high, which looks down on Radcliffe Square, and is overshadowed by the spread of "Heber's chestnut." The future bishop was at B. N. C. as an undergraduate, the branches of the tree touched his windows, and they *do* say (though with little probability) that "the Kenite," as he used to be called, would on occasion avail himself of those inviting arms and leave and return to his rooms without the porter being the wiser. At any rate, it is a beautiful tree, and even if it gains

somewhat in effect from its position on the terrace, it forms an admirable background for the picture.

It only remains to notice the north side, and this is formed by the Bodleian Library and the cloister of the old Divinity Schools—that “swan-song of Gothic architecture”—up whose grey walls the immemorial ivy grows, and whose great windows have looked out on this little spot for more than four centuries. All the middle of the garden is of soft turf, bordered on one side by a winding path which tradition says that Hogarth planned to illustrate the Line of Beauty. In the most central spot of all a great acacia stands, and as you face the far end, the massive dome of the Radcliffe and the soaring spire of St. Mary's rise above its branches, and tell, the one of work which is fitter for man than even the peaceful beauty of the garden, and the other of heaven whence peace and beauty come and where the work of man is at last perfected.

W. K. STRIDE.

A SPRING SONG

MY bird of song I let it loose—
 My one small bird, o'er land and sea;
 And lo! its singing was the cry—
 The cry that sped my king to me.

O maiden sewing by my side,
 At length, at length my lord appears!
 Lay by, lay by the woven dreams:
 Lay by the labours of the years.

Go, gather in the greening woods
 Palm boughs from off the willow tree,
 And pluck of primroses a bed
 Wherein to lay my love and me.

ELIZABETH GIBSON.

ROSCORROCK FOR THE ROSCORROCKS

"**T**HE family of Roscorrock is an auld wan en Cornwall, an' any auld Cornish family be wan which was auld long before the Saxons came to Britain. They Normans be mushrooms," said Roger Roscorrock.

"A Roscorrock," he continued, "was to Runnymede with the two Bassets of Tehidy, who ded sign Magna Carta. Walter de Molesworth, Cheyne, Rowe, Trevanion, an' Roscorrock were en the Holy Lan' with Prince Edward, son to Henry Third. Sir Richard de Greynville, De Prideaux, Sir Walter de Molesworth an' Roscorrock were with 'n when, bein' king, he ded gaw to Scotland."

"Ee do know a brave lot about they auld volk," said Dungarth admiringly. He did not know that he himself was a direct descendant of that King of Cornwall who entertained Alfred the Great of England.

"A man must take a dacent pride en et ef he do come of a good stock," said Roger Roscorrock. "I do be always vindin' out what they auld Roscorrocks ded do. Cruwys, Carew, Basset, an Roscorrock were en France with the Black Prince, along of the men of Redruth, Liskeard, Fowey, an' Looe."

"'Tes very nice, vor zure," said Dungarth, the descendant of kings—for he was getting tired of the old Roscorrocks, and annoyed that he had no ancestry of which to boast—"to belong to such a high family. But, zemmen to me, 'tes no girt 'vantage to 'ee now. 'Ee be Roger Roscorrock, carpenter, an' I be Jan Dungarth, quarryman, and neither wan of we be better 'n t' other, except vor the number of shillings more he can take home on Saturday night."

"Dun't 'ee believe it, Jan. 'Tes a girt 'vantage to be able to point to a long line of vine, brave vorevaithers. Et does give 'ee somethin' to live up to, somethin' to live vor."

"But nawthin' to live by. An' what do et give 'ee to live vor, then? Do'ee tell me thickey?"

"Et do give me a lot to live vor as I can veel, but as I can't zackly tell 'ee. Not as I do mind tellin' 'ee, 'cause us 've always a-been mates. But, somehow, I can't lay tongue to et. But these be wan thing. I mustn't do nawthin' to disgrace my ancestors. An' these be another thing. 'Ee do know thickey auld, ancient house called Roscorrock?"

"Down to Bossinney? Iss, fay."

"Thickey auld, ancient house ded belong to we wance. I'm gwaine to work an' to save tell I do get 'n again vor we Roscorrocks."

"'Twill take 'ee a long time."

"Iss. But I be daggin' to do et, an' I will do et."

"Not by stoppin' en these auld-fashioned country. 'Ee'd better come with me."

"Where be gwaine, then?"

"I be gwaine to Plymouth."

"Aw, Plymouth be a long way to gaw. I should like to gaw to Plymouth wan time just to zee 'n. But thickey 'd cost a vast of money, and I'm bound to save now for Roscorrock. Be 'ee gwaine to quarryin' to Plymouth?"

"Naw. I dun't think there be quarries to Plymouth. Et be all houses."

"All houses?"

"Iss. Zo thick that there edn't room vor a varm en the church town. But I bain't stoppin' to Plymouth. I be gwaine to Africa."

"Aw. 'Tes a terr'ble place, thickey. 'Tes furrin', I do reck'n."

"Iss. An' they do get gold an' diamonds there. They do have black men to do arl the work, an' white men, mos'ly Cornishmen, quarrymen, an' miners from down West, to zee that they blackies do the work vitty. An' they Cornishmen do get good money, an', what be more, they dun't never need to do naw work at arl. Arl they have to do es to make others do 'n."

"'Tes a vine place, thickey, by your account."

"Then why dun't 'ee come with me, instead of spendin' your life to Trevena, where there be naw money to be made. Come

away with me, an' you'll be a rich man, an' can come back an' buy as many auld, ancient, tumble-down houses as 'ee do want."

"T'es not tumble-down, Jan Dungarth."

"May be not," said Dungarth carelessly. "Thickey auld, ancient Roscorrock dun't matter nawthin' to me. I dun't know that I ever ded notice 'n particular. But, ef 'ee do come to Africa with me, 'ee'll zoon make enough money to buy 'n, an' to put 'n en good repair too."

"Not I. I'd rayther stop homealong, where my vorevaithers were big men, an' make a zure livin' among my awn volk, than gaw furrin to barb'rous places, where the volk be arl black, an' where the young lions do roar after their prey, an' do gaw up an' down, zeekin' whom they may devour."

"I dun't think," said Dungarth, with a kind of satirical pity at Roscorrock's ignorance, mingled with a shade of apprehension lest, after all, there might be some truth in Roscorrock's belief, "that they lions be runnin' just wild up an' down the streets, an' en an' out of the beerhouses. Why, zome of the towns en Africa have a hundred publics en 'n. The emigration agent ded tell me. There's a zivilized place vor 'ee."

"Aw, but I wun't come. I must stop hereabouts to keep my eye on Roscorrock en case anywan do think of buyin' 'n. An' I dun't gaw to publics now, an' I dun't smoke, zo as I can zave the money towards buyin' Roscorrock."

"And how much money do 'ee reckon 'ee'll want to buy Roscorrock?"

"Reckon about vive hunderd pounds."

"And', zeein', to the best of my belief, tedn' longer ago than laist Vriday dree weeks that 'ee hadn't given up smokin', an drinkin', by a brave bit, how much have 'ee zaved?"

"Aw, not much yet."

"But how much?"

"Not very much."

"Have 'ee zaved hunderd pounds?"

"Aw," said Roscorrock, with a large air, as if such sums were everyday matters, "perhaps not quite thickey yet."

"Have 'ee zaved vity?"

"Well, 'ee do know, 'tes difficult to tell 'zackly without countin', an' countin' do take zuch a long time."

"Twenty?"

"How can I zay zackly?"

"Ten?"

"Tell 'ee, I can't tell 'ee zackly."

"Now, Roger, just tell me, as an auld mate, an' et shan't gaw naw vurther."

"Well, Jan, to tell 'ee truth, 'tes just ten shillin' up to now."

"Do 'ee just come 'long of me, an' us'll zoon make more than thickey."

"Not I. I must just stop homealong, an' keep an eye on my house."

So they parted, and John Dungarth passed from the knowledge of the Tintagel and Trevena folk for years. But Roscorrock stayed and toiled away at the bench, adding every week to his savings bank book as many shillings as could possibly be spared from the next week's living. He lived hard, did Roscorrock, and that was a mortification of the flesh to him, for, like most Cornishmen, he was a hearty eater. He denied himself tea, and to go without that is a great deprivation to a Cornishman. Then there came a time when Lucy Dungarth, John's sister, found favour in his eyes. She was a buxom, black-haired and black-eyed wench, who had played with Roger and John when they were all children, and, despite his reputation for meanness, she was not disinclined to look favourably on Roger. For he had also a reputation for a bit of money saved. Roger was screwing his courage to the sticking point, for he was a modest man, and had more than once led up with care, really, although he did not know it, helped by Lucy, to the question. And, when he had got close to it, he had shied, and had bolted down some other road which led to the weather, or to John Dungarth in Africa, or anywhither that happened to be off the straight. And there was another thing that made him jib a little. It would probably be cheaper to have a saving wife than to remain a bachelor. And every saving brought his house nearer. But was Lucy saving?

Was she not, like her brother, rather wasteful? Beauty is only skin deep, but wastefulness goes to the bone.

Roger took Lucy to Windingford Fair. In the thick of the fair itself, the impulse took him to say his say, and to ask his question. The times and seasons when this madness, which we call love, seizes a man with redoubled strength and forces him to say things which he ever after regrets, are inexplicable. The cold-blooded third party, who is not in love with Lucy Dungarth, cannot tell why Roscorrock did not use the opportunity of the lonely road during the outward journey, or why, having postponed so often, he could not postpone until the homeward journey. Such things cannot be understood. Anyhow, Roscorrock took his courage in both hands, and said:

"Lucy, there be wan question I've a-been wanting' to ask 'ee vor a long time."

"Iss, Roger," said Lucy meekly. But she was getting the gaff ready.

"Vor a long, long time, Lucy—dear."

"Iss, Roger—dear."

"I've a-been wantin' to ask 'ee—to ask 'ee—to ask 'ee——"

This kind of fish is a very shy one, and the gaff must be used with the utmost care. Lucy struck too soon.

"To ask me what, then, Roger, dear?"

"Oh, just, ef—ef—you'd like a fairin'."

"Iss, an' thank 'ee kindly, dear."

Lucy was disappointed that the fish had darted away again. Yet she thought that a fairing might be intended to say what the shy tongue could not. And a fairing, suitably chosen and well displayed, is almost an engagement symbol. If his friends and neighbours all tell a man that he is walking out, he begins to think that he must be doing so.

"What would 'ee like, then?"

"Wan of they li'l brooches with 'Mizpah' written on 'n."

Roscorrock did not know that nowadays "Mizpah" means "We are walking out." Men are so ignorant and foolish. So they walked down to Wat Ede's shop.

"No do 'ee choose what 'ee do like," said Roger.

Lucy looked over the whole stock. Then she looked over it again.

"I wonder," she thought, "how much he will go to. I may as well have a good one. The bigger it is, the more binding, it seems to be."

At last she chose.

"How much be et, Wat?" asked Roscorrock.

"Ten shillin' to you, Roger," said Wat. Considering that it was marked with the secret mark "d/-," any one who is an expert in such things can tell how much Wat allowed Roger off the price.

"'Ee'll have to trust us, then. I'd never come to fair with zo much money as thickey vor veaf of somewan stalin' he."

"That's arl right, Roger. An' perhaps I can zell 'ee a ring zoon."

Wat and Lucy laughed. But Roger looked serious. Marriage was all very well. It added to a man's comforts; did not, given a careful wife, necessarily add to his expenses, and might possibly increase his income. With a wife, one might take in some of the summer lodgers who come to Trevena and call it Tintagel. Or, if a wife had a nice little shop, now, money might be made and saved till there was enough of it to buy old, ancient Roscorrock. But a woman who wasted ten shillings over a fairing, and a useless one at that, was no wife for a man who had a house to buy. A pair of boots would have been cheaper and more useful. And so, though Lucy called him "dear," though she pressed his arm through which hers passed, though the road home was, for a good length, between high hedges, and had sharp turnings, which hedges and turnings were protections from the other travellers, had there been any, Roger was irresponsive, and could never be brought up to that question.

Then Penhall died. Penhall used to keep the little shop just on the outskirts of the village on the Boscastle road, and he did a very good little business. The bacon and other eatables he sold to the carters alone must have brought him in ten shillings a week clear profit. And Penhall had a fourth share in a boat and lobster-pots with the two Dangars and Basset.

"Roger," said Basset, "we'm wantin' a partner now Penhall be dead. Do 'ee think et ed suit 'ee to give we ten pound for Penhall's share en the bwoat an' goodwill?"

"'T'es too much," said Roscorrock. "Zemmen to me 'ee must take somewan. You'm bound to gaw out twice a day, barrin' the Zabbath, when they lobsters do have twenty-vower hours to zweat 'nselfes to death en they pots. An' you'm bound to take another partner, or else pay a man to gaw with 'ee. Dree of 'ee can't manage thickey bwoat an' they pots vitty. An' then, ef 'ee do have me, who'm a carpenter, vor partner, there be many jobs as 'ee do spoil, or as 'ee have to pay to get done, as I can do vor the bwoat vor nawthin'. Zemmen to me, 't 'ed pay 'ee to take me en as partner vor nawthin'."

"'Ee do know, Roger Roscorrock, we do make good money outen the up-country furriners en zummer."

"Tell 'ee what. Vive pounds."

"Naw. Culdn't think of et."

"Do 'ee tell they Dangars I do zay vive pounds."

"Iss, fay. I'll tell 'n, but they wun't look at et."

At length they compromised on seven-pounds-ten.

Roscorrock looked into Penhall's shop that evening. The widow was serving behind the counter, and Roger noticed that trade was brisk. He also noticed that the widow was the same. She was a taking widow, and none so old, after all. Just old enough to have got sense, and to be a careful, saving body. It was very comfortable to see all the eatables dangling from the rafters. Roger thought how pleasant it would be to put by every week a little from the shop, and a little from the carpentering, and a little from the fishing, all towards buying Roscorrock. How pleasant it would be to live well, and to know that one was eating only at wholesale price. The widow had no encumbrances. Just as the last customer left the shop, Roger had arrived at this point in his thought, and he was in a reverie.

"Evenin', Maister Roscorrock," woke him.

"Evenin', Mrs. Penhall. I just looked en to tell 'ee as I've a-bought your maister's share en the fishin'."

"Most kind of 'ee, I'm zure, Maister Roscorrock. I dun't
VOL. LXXIV. M

expect no more customers. Will 'ee step en an' take a bit of zupper?"

There was a pleasant smell of cooking. But Roger hesitated. It never does to make oneself too cheap.

"There's a tatty pasty that's got crust to melt in your mouth, though I do zay et as shouldn't."

Roger never could resist a potato pasty. He stepped in and took a bit of supper. And he came again. And yet again.

It was some two months after that. The up-country foreigners had been plenty, and the fishing company had paid good dividends.

"Roger," said the elder Dangar, "you've never paid your zeven-ten yet to these partnership."

"Iss, I have."

"Have 'ee got 'n, Basset?"

"Naw, I reckon."

"Have you, Harry?"

"Naw."

"An' I haven't. Who ded 'ee pay 'n to, then, Roger?"

"To the widow, of course."

"But we were hes partners."

"Zo was she. Zleepin' partner. 'T'es law, an' 'ee can't upset 'n."

"You ded agree with us to pay."

"Iss. An' when I ded agree with you, I ded mean to pay you. But when—an' you may as well know et zoon as late—I ded zettle to marry the widow I ded make up my mind to pay her the money."

So Roger married the widow and the shop. And as she, although not so willing as Roger to skin a flea for its hide and tallow, was a saving body, the money began to grow. There is no doubt that the very hardest money to save is the first five pounds. After ten years they had five hundred pounds and one little girl of three years old. A taking baby, the darling, of her father and mother. They called her, by her father's and against her mother's, wish, Lucy.

Now, when Roger had the five hundred, he went to the owner of Roscorrock.

"Maister Polsue, what would 'ee take vor Roscorrock?"

"Wouldn't sell, Roger."

"Money's money, an' es always good. Land's muck, an' bricks be clay. Dun't 'ee put trust en idols with feet of clay."

"Look 'ee here, Roger. I've a good tenant, and I'm not anxious to sell. Of course, I'll sell at a price. But that wun't be anythin' like your price. What will you give?"

"Vive hundred, zir."

"Thought so. I wun't take a penny under a thousand."

So Roger went home with his tail between his legs, and schemed more, and was more cheeseparang. The winter came, and he cut down the food and the firing. Every halfpenny had to go for the house. Lucy fell ill and died. Roger was very sorry, for he loved her dearly. But that unreasonable woman, his wife, who could not understand how Roscorrock blood moved him to high ideals and to a house called after his own name, said that Lucy had died through Roger's meanness in food, and firing, and doctoring. Roger, though high-minded and philosophical, as became a Roscorrock, felt this deeply, and there was, for some time, as estrangement. But that was made up, because, of course, Roger was bound to have the money from the shop to go towards the house. So, for this great end, he had to temporise in small things. But there was always something rankling in the foolish woman's mind, and she was never quite the same to Roger afterwards. Lucy was the only child she had ever had. And, added to the fact that she was no longer young, Roger had said that, until the house was bought, he could afford no more children, and there should be no more. So they toiled on together, in double harness which was beginning to make the galled jades wince, for another seven years for the Rachel of Roger's desire. And then Roger was able, by his own savings, and by the breeding power of money, to go to Mr. Polsue, knowing that he had a cool thousand behind him.

"I be come, Maister Polsue, to buy Roscorrock of 'ee," began Roger, as continuing the conversation of seven years before.

"Rather sudden, isn't it?" said Polsue, who had forgotten all the circumstances. "What are you goin' to give me?"

"Thousand pounds."

"'Tisn't enough. I want guineas."

"But 'ee ded tell me pounds."

"When?"

"'Tes zeven year these last zeventeenth of Zeptember just past, vower months before my Lucy died." And, sincerely and deeply moved, Roger wiped his eyes.

"Daresay I did if you say so. But I can't consider that I'm anyhow bound by that. I never made you a serious offer, and, if I had, I couldn't keep it open for seven years."

And Roger, who would have haggled with a shopkeeper over a halfpenny, dare not quarrel with these large sums at stake, particularly when it concerned Roscorrock. Perhaps, if he insisted too much, Mr. Polsue might altogether refuse to sell to him.

That last fifty took a lot of getting. The boat was not beached high enough that winter, and a heavy sea coming with a westerly wind on the top of the springs carried her down into the cove, where she was smashed into splinters. Mrs. Roscorrock began to get ill, and the shop hardly paid its way. She was no longer young, and a hard life made her old beyond her age. Younger and more enterprising people were beating her in the shopkeeping race. There was little profit in Roger's carpentry. In fact, he was unpopular with the unthinking folk who did not understand his high aims. They called him ugly names, and patronised a younger carpenter who took his pipe and his glass, had a wife and a swarm of children, and yet grudged no fairings to as many pretty girls as liked. So, one thing with another, the fifty took a year to make, and then Roger walked in to Windingford to see Polsue.

As he went down Fore Street, the Launceston coach was coming in. With a flourish of literal and metaphorical trumpets, it drew up at the "King's Head," and there got down a burly but active man, looking in the prime of middle age. Roger was passing as this man got down, and the latter looked curiously towards him and then said:

"Why, isn't it Roger Roscorrock?"

"Iss. Aren't you Jan Dungarth?"

"Yes. Roger, you're looking old."

"Auld? I dun't think zo."

"You're looking twenty years older than I look. I've had a hard-working life, too."

"Have 'ee done well?"

"Very well. Speculatin', you know. And most things turned up trumps. I'm not a millionaire, as some of 'em who went out no better off than I did are now. I've made a bit, and I've stopped, and have come home to enjoy what I've made. D'you remember, Roger, that old, ancient Roscorrock that we talked about once, and that you had an idea of buyin'? I remembered it, and, when I had made a bit, I took a fancy to buy it, and to live in it. Funny, isn't it? I suppose you've lost your old idea, and I've taken it up."

"'Ee can't buy 'n, Jan," said Roger with great emotion. "I'm a-gwaine to buy 'n myself."

"But you can't now, old chap. I'm sure you won't mind givin' way to an old friend. It can't mean much to you, and, really, I set my mind on it a year or two back. To tell you the truth, I sent the money over to my sister some while since, and it's been my property for the last six months. Now, once upon a time, Roger," he continued confidentially, "I thought you and she might have drawn up together, but I suppose you both thought different. A pity, you know, for I've no wife nor child, and Lucy will keep house at Roscorrock for me. And you might have lived there, and have had it after me, if I died first. At any rate, your children might have kept Roscorrock for the Roscorrocks."

G. STANLEY ELLIS.

MY NORMANDY

AFTER THE FRENCH OF F. BÉRAT

WHEN thrills the world and wakes from
trance,
And winter flies far off,—away,—
When to the fair skies of our France
The sun returns with gladder ray,—
When green grows every blade and tree,
When swallows wing their homeward flight,
I'll see once more my Normandy,—
My Normandy that gave me light !

I've seen Helvetia's fields, and high
Her Alpine cots by glaciers cold,
I've seen the sky of Italy
And Venice's lagoons of gold ;
In greeting every land,—“ To me
No place,” I said, “ that meets my sight,
Is fairer than my Normandy,—
My Normandy that gave me light ! ”

There comes a time in mortal life
When every dream must fade and die,
A time when stayed from joy or strife
The soul must on itself rely ;
When mute my frozen muse shall be,
Her songs of love all lost in night,
I shall go seek my Normandy,—
My Normandy that gave me light !

MARY MACLEOD.

A WOMAN OF STRAW

I

WINNIE TELFER was a typewriter, well-earning fifteen shillings a week at the two-roomed office in Coleman Street, City, of Mr. McAndrew, the secretary of—chief among numerous other companies whose names were registered on the doors and jambs—the Mock Turtle Gold Extracting Syndicate, Limited. She was twenty-one, and two years before had left stepmotherly relations in Gloucester, and come to London with the last hundred pounds of patrimony, and the belief (with thoughts of the Brontës) that what she could write publishers would pay for and publish. It took eighteen months' hard fighting for disillusion to overwhelm her; but one day she had shamefully taken from her landlady the last returned manuscript left by the postman, and, climbing to her one room in the roof, had glanced at the printed refusal and then, scanning for a moment the much-beposted package of paper, had set her teeth and jammed the manuscript into the small fire and held it down with the poker. Then she choked a little, and as the twilight came down over the housetops she lay on the bed and sobbed, and thought of her mother and father and the nodding grass over their graves.

But her purse had only thirteen shillings and a few pawn-tickets; and after three weeks tramping she found Mr. McAndrew in want of a lady clerk at eight shillings a week for a month, and ten if she should then satisfy him. The past three weeks had broken her: the proposed dole meant at least not the desperate streets.

She satisfied Mr. McAndrew; her conscientiousness was out of all proportion to so little money. After a year, he proposed to give her twelve-and-sixpence a week, but suggested that he should pay the fee for her tuition in typewriting, on condition of her repaying him half by postponing the advanced salary.

She had not written in her diary since she had torn up her last manuscript ; but had neatly printed on the cover the word "Frustra," which she had happened upon in her reading. This was inscribed as a stringent self-incitement ; and she often re-read resolute passages in the book so as to keep her life's aim clearly set before her. She would get into a better berth and make that her staff. Thus she thought at times ; but more often was frightened at the inevitable mechanism into which her life was falling. She lived in one room at Clapham ; every week-day morning took a certain tram, entered the same office, sat at the same desk, saw the same narrow head with dark foreign-looking face opposite at the table by the dirty window, went to the same Aërated Bread-shop to lunch meagrely, left the office at six every evening, took the same tram to return to the same street, house, room, fireside, books and bed. At lower moods it seemed monstrous that this machinal habit of the body and a constrained part of her mind should be the jailor of all the better part of her, cramping, chaining, devitalising.

Her only friend in the world was a girl of whom she had been fond at school, Lily Rothwell. She, however, had become a pupil teacher and moved to London, but on her marriage went to live at Sutton, in Surrey. They had kept up an intermittent correspondence since Winnie had been in London, and her friend, now Mrs. Seavoy, had once or twice invited her to spend Sunday with her ; but the girl had refused, seeing that she had resented Mrs. Seavoy's former advice to devote herself to some realisable ideal, and had no rebutting literary success to show. When Winnie had been in Mr. McAndrew's office some eighteen months, Mrs. Seavoy, who had seemed glad of her friend's change of life, renewed her invitation ; and this falling upon a mood of longing, the girl on impulse wrote accepting it.

When, on entering their sitting-room on the third Sunday afternoon of her re-acquaintance, she was introduced to a friend of the husband's—Mr. Robert Jones—she felt resentful of his name. For she thought his appearance had no relation to it, nay, contradicted it magnificently. His face was sensitive and strong, his lips full, and his eyes frank, kindly, but in

glimpses somewhat sad. He seemed about thirty years old. His hands were white, the fingers long and fine. His whole appearance, she thought, bespoke delicate origin and character. In manner and speech he was quiet but thoughtful, with, as familiarity deepened during the evening, some raillery that at times seemed salted cynically.

With repressed carelessness, when alone with her friend, she questioned her concerning him. He was a chemist in business with a brother at Wandsworth, and was a very old friend of Mr. Seavoy's. He often visited them on Sundays. She would not ask if he were married.

She bought a new blouse that week, and re-trimmed her hat, and often felt suddenly glad that her friend Lily had suggested, the first time she had visited them, that she should make their house her own home every Sunday—to come to what meal she liked, and stay as long as she cared.

She satisfied her eagerness next Sunday by taking the train that arrived at Sutton by about ten o'clock, but compromised her self-conscious fears by walking over the Downs till eleven. When she went to her friend's house, however, Lily, flustered with pastry-making, terrified her by asking how she got there at such an extraordinary hour, since there was no train that explained the time of her arrival. She said the fancy took her to walk over towards Banstead.

"What? To the asylum?" asked Lily.

"Yes; one gets such a good view of where London lies from there."

"I never go there," said the other. "It's too near *that* place. Mr. Jones says the shrieks are terrible sometimes."

"Does he go there?"

"Yes; he goes to see his wife there. They don't expect she'll ever come out either."

Instantly she felt sick of mind, and all things seemed hateful. But she was expected to say something.

"O, poor thing! Why's that?"

She stood at the table rapidly turning over an apple beneath her hand.

"O, she used to drink. She was nice, and so sorry for him

when she was all right, but she led him a wretched life. Poor Amy, she was all nerves."

"O, how sad it is! Shall I peel these apples for you?"

Mr. Jones stayed later than he had the Sunday before, and, having been entreated to supper, it was found that he was to return home by the train Winnie generally caught. She wondered, with a thrill, at his delay.

The train was rather crowded, and she fancied that he tried to find a quiet carriage. So far as it was possible to talk in the noise of the train, her replies were provoking and superficial, turning off all his attempts at serious conversation that implied his desire to know her. When they reached Clapham Junction it was nearly eleven, the streets were quiet, and the houses dark, except in upper windows.

"Won't your people be wondering where you are?" he asked, as they walked along.

"I don't think they'll worry," she said.

"Do you always come by that train?"

"Always. You see, I haven't any people to worry about me, so I get no credit for late hours."

"Do you like being independent?"

"It saves worry; you don't have to conform to another person's whims, crotchets and bad temper."

"Rather lonely sometimes, isn't it?"

"Solitary, perhaps, not lonely. One has always books, and the sense of independence."

He was silent for some moments.

"I always thought that independence is a splendid thing in theory, but with our modern minds it is rather bad in practice—is found lacking somewhat. At least, speaking personally, I should think it was about that. Of course, as you say, there are books, but they don't always make up for a good 'crack wi' a friend,' as the Scots have it."

She hated herself as she spoke. "Emotionalism is so out of date."

She thought: if he only knew what a miserable fraud she felt! She could have thrown herself about his neck for his quietness, and prayed his pardon.

But as his reproachful silence continued and her lodgings and parting came the nearer she was wrought up with regret and desire of forgiveness. She went to his side, grasping his arm with one quick hand:

"Forgive me, Mr. Jones," she said, breathless and half-stopping in their walk. "I did not mean to insult you. I couldn't bear to know you thought me unkind. I was all wrong and false! I am often lonely and bitter, and—and I can't lose your friendship."

"My dear Miss Telfer," he said, speaking in low moved tones to which she throbbed, "don't suppose I think worse of you. We all have our moods."

"But you do forgive me, don't you? I've been so much alone. Oh you wouldn't imagine how I've longed for friends. I don't know why I was so unnatural, but I—I—want us to be good friends. I—I——"

She panted, as much from the terror of her self-revelation, as from the pent stress of her feelings.

"There, don't worry!" he said, kindly, drawing her arm through his. "You look on it too seriously. I want us to be good friends, too. Why," he said, laughing cheerfully, "you are quite trembling. Don't upset yourself. Let us walk slowly. You are not strong, I fear."

The sense of his supporting touch seemed to shake her being. She tried to speak, but could not for some moments.

"I—I'm afraid you think me very silly," she faltered, as they went on.

"No, no, don't say that," he said, "I don't think that. You are unstrung and tired."

"You are very good to me," she said, warmly grateful.

"It is you who are good to have such confidence in me."

He drew her arm the closer, and seemed to bend the nearer to her.

"I can't help it. I seem to have known you a long while. I've no doubt I'm silly to talk like this, but it's the truth."

He was silent for a moment; then said in a low voice:

"And you will never regret it."

In stagnant hours of the office or in solitary evenings of the

week, when the twilight from the sky gloomed her thoughts, her shame stabbed to the last nerve of her consciousness; she had seen a man twice—the first man she had ever known—and because he was kindly, and had seemed a little sad of life, she had cast off pride, had cherished thoughts that were things of deepest shame, and at last—the actuality would not bear definition. Wrung by her thoughts she would pace her lonely room, clenching her hands. . . .

Nightly as she knelt in prayer she was keen in self-castigation, passionate in craving for strength. But she always ended by beseeching that, however evil she was, he should be kept from harm.

Next day she would still be the flotsom straw upon the fret of moods. It was weak and wicked: that charge was never denied, never wished to be answered. But its bludgeon-blow was mitigated by self-condonation and self-pity, timidly fabricated.

On the following Sunday as the evening wore on, she one moment half-hoped and next moment dreaded, that he would leave by an early train. When, as often was, she caught hungrily a flash of the kindly eyes or a deep tone of the voice addressing her, the tumult of happiness was half-stayed by a sudden fear of herself; but when an ordinary look or tone seemed to hold her as no different from the others in the room, her mind in a sickening panic yearned for intimate speech with him.

When she went to take a seat at the supper table, though it was the longest way round, she passed by where he sat and brushed her hand lightly and fearfully on the back of his chair; and, without being so appointed by her hostess, took a seat opposite to his, which was not her usual place.

They said but little in the train; but she was content to feel that now the sleepy, strange eyes around her did not chill her with their unfriendliness, and the iron clank of the train as it rushed through the lonely country had no power to beat desolation into her mind.

The walk seemed the sweetest experience she had ever enjoyed; every tone, every word of sympathy drew out her

confidence. At first he had frightened her by his advice that she should seek for herself a larger atmosphere—should join some Institute with a view to get friendship and sympathy; but as her confidences became more intimate they seemed, she thought, to reproach him, and he yielded in a caressing commiseration that enwrapped her being lovingly.

But at last the tender lingering had to end, though it had been deferred mutually once or twice, when they had taken another turn through the echoing streets. A request trembled on her lips, put off expression in a sickening fear of refusal. At length they stopped beneath the shadow of a tree not far from the house of her lodging.

"I thought once that I should never get such—such friendship," she said. "I wonder now that I could ever have borne loneliness."

"No; solitude is a thing that is unbearable at last. Solitude of brain, of heart—" he began with a voice of restraint, then checked himself. "But we have to learn," he said quietly.

She looked up at him with a tender fear in her eyes, into which the distant lamp-light shone. He gazed at them, lowered his face, that again was swiftly raised; then quickly drew her to him and kissed her lips hotly, almost fiercely. She bent her burning face, but he kept his arm about her, praying forgiveness.

"I should not have done it!" he panted. "It is wrong, but—but—"

She clasped his hand quickly, and said faintly:

"No; it was right!"

She raised her eyes, dilated with an ardent calm, and smiled.

"My dear Robbie!" she said.

She hid her face again, nestling.

"I know you love me!" she said, "and—and—I can't tell how—how I love you."

He drew his breath like a cry, and looked about desperately.

"It is wrong!" he said. "No, no; this can't go on. Winnie! Winnie! forgive me!"

"Hush!" she said. "There's nothing to forgive. You love me—I don't care for anything else. We are happy."

He was silent for a while, his head bent. Her hands sought

his, clasping them, and she bent her face, peeping up at his, her bright face rallying him. He looked at her, and answered with a sad smile.

"You dear little woman!" he said. Then swiftly he pressed her to himself again, and his passion burned upon her lips. "Good-night!" he said breathless; "good-night, my darling, good night!"

"Won't you—can't you meet me one evening—in the week?" she said faintly. "It is so long—to—to Sunday."

He caught his breath, and stayed in his caresses.

"Oh, my dear girl!" he cried, "you don't know—you don't know what you ask." He paused; then his words came in low tones which vibrated, "Winnie, I have a wife—she is mad, it is true, and lives away—but—but——"

Her hands went about his arm.

"Don't! don't! I know that. I know I am wicked—but—but—I am so lonely. I love you—I have no friends in all London, and—and—you love me. Don't leave me. Oh, if you leave me," she cried in a hard, high voice, "I will kill myself. You have given me love, and now—you are going to leave me. Oh, it is cruel! it is cruel!"

"For God's sake, Winnie, don't say—don't!—don't believe that of yourself. I am miserably weak, but we—we must do our duty! But it is late, my dear. You are overstrung and tired. We must talk over this again. I will meet you on Wednesday night here at eight o'clock. But, Winnie, for the sake of yourself—for my sake, then, dear, don't forget your future, your honour— Oh, my dear, I can see so much misery if we let ourselves go. I love you; I can't deny that—but there is duty to be faced by both. Believe that, dear. I will do nothing against your wish, but, for the sake of the years, the life we can ruin—think, dear, think!"

"I have done that—every evening in my miserable room—in the streets where people meet and speak to their friends—It is no use. I must, oh I must have you—your love. I can't bear life without—any longer."

The commingling of her wild grief, her utter self-renunciation, her pitifulness overwhelmed him.

"There! there! my darling! don't cry. Don't sob like that! You will break my heart! I will never lose you again—but—but— Oh, you make it very hard for me, dear. Think, dear, it is as cruel for me as—as for you."

"Then why do it?" she said, with great intervening sobs. "Let us be happy if it's only for a little while—it can't—it may not be for long."

"Every day worsens it—but, there, never mind to-night, my dear little girl. Dry your eyes, and we will meet again on Wednesday. Good-night, my dear! Good-night! Good-night! and God bless you!"

He was gone, his kisses still hot upon her cheeks, her eyes, her lips. She walked slowly to her lodging, her body glowing as in fire. As she put the key in the lock, the darkness of the house chilled and frightened her. But the door opened to her push; she entered, locked up, and ascended to the attic slowly.

II

LIFE during next day seemed at the lowest ebb. While at one moment she was frantic in the thought that he was able to contemplate separation, in another mood at evening as she sat at the window overlooking the dusky street with its saddening couples slowly passing by, she bitterly supposed that this could happen, passion had been so swift, so sudden a dominance that it seemed all unreal, and in a few months she supposed it would appear as trite a memory as any other of her few poor pleasures of past life.

As she sat in her room in the evening slowly drinking her tea, the little housemaid tapped at the door and, panting, handed her a letter. She trembled at the firm writing of the superscription; but said, "You shouldn't hurry up the stairs so, Milly. You should have called." The shiny-faced child grinned and went away, and shutting the door, the young girl sat down again, holding the letter and looking at it fearfully. At length she tore the envelope swiftly and read:

"MY DEAR WINNIE,—I cannot rest, I must write. I must be cruel to be kind, to help you see your way—our way. You

took my love by storm, and I was weak. I did not think, I did not realise, I did not want to think what it all would mean. I lulled myself not to think, but your wildness, your love has forced me to see how weak, how brutal a fool I should be if I should let your dangerously ingenuous nature wreck your own happiness. Dear, this cannot, this must not go on. I know the anguish it will cause you—but only think! dear, it must be so. Look at the naked statement of the case sternly. A man married, thirty-two years old, with two children, his wife in an asylum—but no, dear, I can't go on. You will understand me and will help me, strengthen me in this our only right course.

"I think and I'm sure you will agree, it will be best we should not meet to-morrow evening. Let me hear from you, addressed to me as above.

"With all my heart,

"I am, yours,

"R. J."

In the abandon of her tears she reached for paper and pen, and wrote:

"ROBBIE,—If you love me, no, as you love me, meet me to-morrow evening. You cannot mean it. You have given me yourself, your love, and now you talk of leaving me. I almost think you do not feel for me. You give me a gleam of the sweetest happiness in my dark life, you have lifted me out of my lonely misery for a moment, and now you wish to drop me back again. Why do you torture me so? I want you, you say you love me. If you do not love me, say so; but do meet me to-morrow night. You have broken my life, and I shall get no rest till I see you.

"Yours for ever and ever,

"WINNIE."

With agitated quickness she directed and stamped the letter, and then after bathing her eyes hurried to the post. She walked back slowly and heavily, and spent the evening in a musing wretchedness that sometimes welled up in tears, and sometimes drove her up and down within the narrow confines of her room,

a fury in her eyes, in her clenching hands, and burning in her mind against the barriers that honour, duty, God and man seemed to have reared against her.

A night of miserable wakefulness carried her into a day whose summer glory never beamed into her pent wretchedness. She passed through her work machinally; and when taking notes from her employer's dictation her mind, brooding sullenly, only at moments became angrily self-conscious.

She went home hurrying, one moment desperate, next instant breathless. Her fingers closed round a letter addressed to her lying upon the shabby hall-stand in the threadbare passage. She went up the stairs trembling, flushing hot and cold. She thought she would not take off her hat and cape; but the first words of the ripped-open letter drove the blood from her lips and her quick breath came like moans:

"MY DEAR GIRL,—Is the consequence of any longing action ever in the minds of you women? or do you give before your impulses as miserably helpless as leaves in the wind? If I appear harsh am I not also under the lash of necessity? You do not make my duty a little easy—with your cries, your clinging, your pleading. You fight me as women fight men, with a most cowardly weapon—your own weakness. If I am constrained by your pitiful loneliness shall I not do wrong both to you and myself and another by yielding to your wild weakness? Think of the future; what it might mean to you, to me, to another man who may come to love you and crave your love. If we yield we wrong four souls—we should be things of shame to ourselves and to others. I should not dare to take again the hand of a trusting friend—or look straight into his eyes—nor would you.

"Think, Winnie, you are not one of those women of straw that have no self-direction. Would you willingly have yourself and me mortgage the future to untold misery and heartache for the sake of the passionate self-indulgence of the present?

"To some women, I know that love and its promptings seem to be the final and unquestioned law of conduct, and any miserable consequence, any sordid weakness excusable; but you

know there is something better and stronger—self-restraint—duty, self-honour. O, Winnie, you must know how you would hate me and despise me in the years to come, how we should hate ourselves five, ten years hence, if the misery dragged so long, to find that I and my selfish love had ruined your life, sapped away your self-reverence, and that I, the man, had not had the strength to curb myself and save you from yourself and me.

"It is because I think there are two women in you that I speak so openly. There is in you the nature that is impulsive, passionate and wild; but there is also the woman with mental interests, criticism of things and men and yourself, and some ambition. I make my appeal to the latter not to let the former push us both to hell.

"Do you think I speak coldly? Do I reason too much? But, my dear what is the use, what would be the end? O, I can see the years before us if we yielded—slow, sapping years that would wear out your dear heart, weaken your dear life, and every day distil a greater pain in me, in the knowing that if I could not have rescued you from your friendlessness, I could at least have saved you from the slow agony of secret passion leading to no hope of happiness. Dear! the thought of you almost makes me think I am doing wrong—but I am sure it is right to do as we are going to do.

"But I cannot part from you utterly. Furtive meetings would be torture to both, but at least, dear, we can write to each other, we can be dear friends, until you meet some one who will cherish you as every good woman deserves to be. So, my dear, until you wish or it is best otherwise, we may always be confidants, helpful and sympathetic, and better and stronger for the knowledge of each other."

She hardly glanced through two long paragraphs suggesting means whereby she could gain friends and new mental interests. The letter ended thus :

"With your interests of mind and ambition I can see a fruitful future before you. You will succeed in time, I am sure; you have, I think, the slow passion for your work that will

outlive a little check, and will win thro' neglect, unappreciation and hard work to your aim.

"Let me hear from you, dear, always I will help you till you wish it to be—or until it will be better it should be—otherwise.

"I am, from my heart, your friend,

"ROB."

When she had read the letter she flung it on the table and got up, taking off her cape and hat. She busied herself in lighting the oil-stove and laying her meal. As she sat drinking the strong tea she drew the letter to her, sought out and re-read impatiently a passage of it, then flung it away from her again with a sharp little laugh. Suddenly she arose and cleared a space on the small table, got pen, paper and ink, and sat to write. But with pen in her hand the bubbling thoughts seemed to freeze. She sat wrinkling her brow, looking at the blank paper under her fingers; then, to incense her thoughts again, she took his letter up and read a part of it. "A woman of straw!" she muttered.

She would not answer the letter; she would treat it with its own contempt. Oh, to think that she had confided all her past life to him, had thrilled beneath his kisses! She rose, stung at the memories, her throat in anguish, and stepping swiftly to the window flung it up, striving to turn her obstinate thoughts to the life of the twilight street, her fingers clenched, her bosom panting.

She would go out. She put on her hat and cape, and was going out of the room when the grey patch on the table in the dim light caught her eyes: she went back and tumbled the letter into its envelope and thrust it in her pocket.

A night of sound sleep seemed to bring no softening. She felt hard, and was glad of it; sang snatches of a tune as she prepared her breakfast, stepped along the streets with an effort at pertness, and tried to appear scornful of those that looked at her. She resolved to cultivate this manner, to be nonchalant and bold. It was safer than wearing one's heart on one's sleeve to be despised and patronised by those that affected sympathy. As she went up the stairs of the building to the

office, her face down, she hummed an air, half-fearful lest one or other of the men passing should address her. At the top of the last flight some one said: "Nice day for a stroll, my dear!" She turned sharply, and for a breathless instant held the flippant eyes startled by the flash of her contempt in face, lips and pose; then she turned away, faint and pulsing, a spiteful laugh following her. She unlocked the office door, closed it with a bang, and went to her seat, panting. She threw herself down on the chair, her head on her arms upon the grimy desk, crying suddenly with great sobs: "O Robbie, my dear! my dear!"

III

LIFE, however broken, had to be lived; the mercilessly arid business letters had to be taken down, transcribed, copied and posted, the routine of minute books, share registers and certificates, debasing, brutalising, had to be respected, for, as she told herself in a sullen frenzy, there was but one alternative. Whether that ultimate mad self-relief of so many lonely women would be her own solution she wondered. She got to look forward, however, as some solace in the impass of her wretchedness, to the next week, when she would be going for her annual holiday to some distant relations at Torquay.

To her own keen sense, that fortnight of holiday was her salvation. Amongst a houseful of healthy young people, with drives, rides and boating, saturated in the long days by the sun and wind, and refined by great expanses, her spirits lifted and balanced; so that, though depressed at departure and the sense of the desolation that was Londonwards, good health bore her up. Her mind worked about the experience that, seen through the large, wide atmosphere of the sunlit fortnight, seemed months behind, until, on the second evening of her return to business, she felt possessed and strenuous, and, taking pen and paper, began to set down, with a fictional framing, the passionate anguish that was but a few days old. It was only to be a note, a record for future work, perhaps, if she ever did write again. She worked far into the night, and next day was happy in the eager weaving of her thoughts about what she had

written, for its closer elaboration, and that which was to be done to complete the tale. By the time she had finished and revised it, her eagerness had quelled self-reproach.

She took it immediately to be typewritten, though she could not really afford the cost; then, the same evening, with a formal note she sent it to a magazine. When it had gone out of her hands she was wretched. It was a crime to reveal such a throbbing sorrow; there seemed something heartless, inhuman in writing down each quivering element of pain. It was not hers alone—but had she ever really suffered; had she in the very naked centre of her soul been wrung; could she really feel? No; she would not write to him; this had wronged him; it was deceit; it was the cruellest treason. It seemed as if she had acted; had coerced from him his passion, his tenderness, his kisses merely to vend them to a magazine. But in the sway of moods she told herself: no, that was not true. She had hurt no one; she had only cured herself. She had done no more than that which thousands of the world's brightest had done in self-medicament—poured their soul's suffering out into a song or a moving tale.

She tried to think that she believed nothing would come of the contribution, because, she told herself, those things always happened which she did not hope. But one evening a small envelope with the superscription in a strange hand was given to her as she entered the house. Her heart throbbed heavily; her knees trembled as she went upstairs, opening the envelope. At the staircase window she read:

OFFICE OF "NANDO'S JOURNAL," Aug. 19, 1898.

"DEAR MADAM,—I rather like your 'Educative Episode,' but you must alter the ending. It is too hopeless. Can you give me a call on Monday next at five, when we could talk it over? I think the title should be changed; and the long letter must be shortened.

"Yours faithfully,

"ARTHUR LAWMAN."

She turned to the open window, gripping the sill tightly, and clenching her teeth till the swaying world steadied and stood

still. Then she went upstairs and set about her meal quietly, but with a fierce exultation straining to cry out. After her tea she wrote in reply, saying simply that she would attend at the time named. The next two days were feverishly lived, the expectation overwhelming the reproach at her heart. She said to herself that no doubt she was building too much on this promise of success, and belittled her hopes and excitement on her way to keep the appointment, and, vindictive of herself, loitered on the journey. Her perversity, however, trembled away as she sat in the pretty waiting-room of a flat in Cromwell Road, but her spirit revived to the welcome of the little, round, bald-headed editor whose geniality shone through golden rims.

Well, about the tale she had offered! He liked the style; it showed power; it was restrained; a little journalistic, perhaps, yet artistic and feelingly written. But she must alter the end; he could not put it in his magazine as it stood. The end, as written, might (with momentary deferential commiseration) be true; but (his round face shone with smiles) his readers did not care for it. Could she not make it less hopeless; make the wife die after a little while—a few months or so—and thus bring them together?—make them happy? What? He noted chill hesitation on the young lady's face. No one, he continued, would accept the tale as it was, except from a known writer; but the story merited publication; it showed great promise. What?

She was frightened at the pause that followed; her mind shuttled to and fro in distress: it was the chance of her life, perhaps, but what a wretched mocker, what a miserable deceit she would be. What would *he* think if he happened to read it! But it was only a tale, she did not mock him, no, God knew that. As she sat she yearned again with all the past sickness of her passion, and saw his tender face bending down.

Would she like to take the manuscript away with her and think it over? What? The tone seemed cold and the round face set chilly.

"Oh no," she said with frantic composure. "I was merely thinking—er—would you want it—wouldn't the new ending make the tale too long?"

"Not at all," he said, his eyes a little searching. "It is condensed writing as it is. Have you ever written before?"

"Yes, for years."

"Anything published?"

"No, never yet," she said, and knew she had no further defence, perhaps had destroyed herself.

"Well, if you keep on as this is written"—he tapped the typed page beside him—"you will soon get on. And there are one or two emendations I've ventured to make. You must cut out the last two paragraphs of the long letter. They're not necessary with the new ending." He looked at his watch. "I think that's all." He folded the manuscript and put it in its envelope; and rose from his seat.

"Let me have it within the next ten days. I should like to put it in the October number."

"Thank you," she said, taking the manuscript. Then trembling at her daring. "May—may I offer you any other work?"

"What? oh, if it is as good as this I shall always be glad to consider it. But it mustn't be hopeless—a little gentle irony, perhaps, but not bitter—not bitter. What? Good-day!"

Getting home, she prepared and quickly ate her tea; then opened the manuscript. As she read it, half-wondering what it was that made the editor desire it, she became repelled by its pages. Coming to her record of that second passionate night, in the reality of her narrative her mind suddenly contrasted the "happy ending" she was to write. She rose suddenly to her feet, snatched the manuscript to her with a fierce gesture, crumpling it in her hands. "Oh!" she said, vehemently. She looked about the room for a place to throw the pages out of hateful sight. She stood in anguish for a moment, then her straining figure shook, she sank down before the chair, the manuscript dropping to the floor.

When she had cried herself quiet she rose from her knees, and picked up the manuscript. She carefully folded it, trying to smooth out the creases, the thought in her mind being that she must think over what she should do. Then laying the paper flat between two volumes of Chambers' Encyclopædia she piled the remaining volumes above it and went out for a walk.

What would *he* wish her to do? He wished for her success, and believed she would attain it; but would he desire her to get it by such heartless means? She was condemned in the very thought. But her mind timidly opposed: she had so covered up the real facts by the fictional setting that really nothing could be known. But she had inserted his letters almost word for word, except where indications of the actual circumstances were altered. But he and his brother were great readers: how it would stab him to look into the pages of the magazine and know that his tenderness had been tricked, his passion played with. He would believe she had cruelly simulated; that she had torn his passion out of him and vended it, quivering and still quick, for a little success.

During the next day she had wild thoughts in the come and go of her distress. She would write to Mr. Lawman saying she had decided not to alter the tale; but then the one door just now a-jar to the world of her ambition would be barred against her, and she would be outside all life again. O if she could not use the passion that seemed to be in her, she must turn that strength into work that at least promised another satisfaction. She could not, she could not wilfully put herself back into her old wistful misery, loveless and unfriended. She wished she knew some one to whom she could tell all her trouble. . . . And if she cast off Mr. Lawman it might be years before she got such another chance. *Nando's Journal* was a foremost magazine; she had never dared to send a tale to it before, and her work must be good for the editor to trouble to parley with her.

As the day wore on and the evening leisure approached, she longed for something wherewith to steel herself; she remembered the glowing pleasure of creation, the strenuous joy of restraint in writing. Her thoughts imagined passages in Carlyle preserved in her commonplace book.

But the evening was wasted; she could get no spiritual backing from any of the prophet's sententious dicta; she tried Marcus Aurelius, but he was too hurried and a little extreme. There seemed, indeed, to be no precedent for her case. Meanwhile the manuscript lay prone under heavy volumes. She jerked

the fruitless moralists aside and looked at the lamp-flame, her face a little sour. Why should she worry? He had put her out of his life, she had been foolish, impulsive, almost shameless—but she had only herself to rely on for her future. If she missed this opportunity, could he make it good to her, if it were possible she should ever approach him? It might be that he, through this experience, would be more useful to her than he could ever be otherwise. Was not that what he would desire? She laughed a little bitterly at the thought; but dwelt upon it. Besides, her infatuation had been a momentary madness, her life was at last set to the doing of this work. If he saw what she had done—well, if he were sensible, he must know she had to work for herself and could not look to him; moreover the artistic temperament was different from others, indeed, hardly understandable by most people.

She felt a little self-satisfied in the last appreciation and got out the manuscript. It still looked crumpled; but she resolved she would steam it and press it again. She drew the paper to her and began writing, for at the base of her mind during the day she had wrought out a satisfactory "happy ending." She stayed writing till three in the morning, then revised what she had written, enclosed it with a letter in an envelope, which she stamped and laid by ready for posting. She felt sure of herself now, it seemed almost out of her hands.

Nearly two months had passed. She had seen Mr. Lawman again on his requiring a slight alteration in the tale, and he had interested himself in her restrained answers to his questions. The publication of the "Educative Episode" (under a new title) had been postponed to the November number of the magazine, now almost due, but her depression at this delay, and a feeling of being slighted had been comforted by Mr. Lawman's geniality, and a request for a short tale or two for a weekly paper which he edited. Looking back she marvelled and thrilled at her achievement. In eight weeks how the world had changed? She had had two sketches and three tales accepted and paid for, and Mr. Lawman had said her work would soon be recognised. She had always imagined an editor to be

an incarnate scorn, who accepted or rejected as caprice veered, and never stooped to ask for "copy," or said a kindly word.

She had moved from her old lodging: if Mr. Jones should get anxious at her silence she could not bear to see him. After she had sent off the manuscript the second time, the fear of a visit had become frantic; she had dreaded to go home in the evening. Now in one room on the slightly draggled fringes of Bloomsbury she felt secure, and wrote every night, happy and eager.

When one day alone in the office, her quick fingers turned over the glazed leaves of her tale in the November number of the magazine, with the pride and gratification came the thought that if she wrote to him, sending a copy of it, and telling him the truth of her trouble, he might forgive her. He might be glad to see how she had succeeded; but, even if he were indifferent and was angry, at least it would relieve her own mind. As it was, there was always a furtive self-despisal.

In the evening she wrote the letter in a sudden glow of impulse. It ran as follows:

"DEAR MR. JONES,—I send you the last number of *Nando's Journal*. The second tale I wrote, but its title and its ending are not mine. I *had* to write them. I want you to read it, and then to read this letter again. Do not be hard on me. It may seem callous to have written it—as if I had all along deceived, you and aped what I did not feel, but, as God knows, and I hope you too, my recklessness had not an atom of the sense, the judgment you wished to see in me. I wrote it I hardly know why. I was impelled to do it, and I hope you will not be wounded. I felt the better for having done so. I seemed to have written the rashness out of me. The result, I don't doubt you will think, from what you said in your letter, was to be desired, but you may feel hurt at my means. But I do hope you will understand me. I was foolish, and I can see now how good you were, how sensible and kind. I do hope you won't misunderstand me. You were generous to me when I was so wild and weak, being lonely and friendless, with no future. I thank you now, whatever you may think of me and what I have

done. I thank you with all my soul for your kindness, when others would have yielded and been cruel.

"From my heart,

"WINNIE TELFER."

All day the burden of her thoughts was: "I do hope he will understand me!" Sometimes the crime against love seemed so heinous that she was prone before the shame; in other moods she had the world's greatest writers on her side whose sweetest works are the expressions of their most bitter anguishes. She read over passages of his letter in furtive moments while poring over ledgers or minute books; and in a moment her mind would rise thrilling in the sense of the nobility that could write such unselfish, such loving cruel lines. She was sure he would understand. But if he showed his self-love was slighted? O, then she would be poor indeed; poorer by the loss of the knowledge of one strong, noble man.

In the evening, on reaching home, her fingers eagerly tore open a waiting envelope, and her eyes pricked to these words:

"MY DEAR MISS TELFER,—I like your tale very much, not only as literature, but as showing the self-possessed state of your mind. Don't fear; I am not disturbed. If I were a writer myself, your curious compound of character would be first spoil of my pen. As it is, I shall always be most glad to see and hear of your success. There is one thing, at least, that you show you have attained—the possession of your own strong sweet soul. Believe me, it is worth the having.

"Yours ever sincerely,

"ROBERT JONES."

"There!" she said, the tears welling over the lids. She trembled before the resurgence of old yearning. "O, Robbie my dear! my dear!" she cried, "if I could have you now I'd be content!"

HENRY GILBERT.

A ROMANCE OF ART-COLLECTING

THE human race, it has been said, may be divided into three categories: men, women—and collectors. The collector—whether of old china, of *éditiones principes*, of pictures, of objets d'art, or what not—is a creature apart. His watchword is rarity. Presupposing a vogue for such things, he would eagerly scour the world in quest of a unique brickbat. In general, of course, rarity is not the only source of attraction; but while one can understand a first folio Shakespeare fetching £1700, a Fust and Schoeffer's Psalter £4950, there is not equal *raison d'être* for Mr. Kipling's "Schoolboy Lyrics" realising £135, or for the first edition of Bradshaw's Time-table making £25, as it did a few weeks ago.

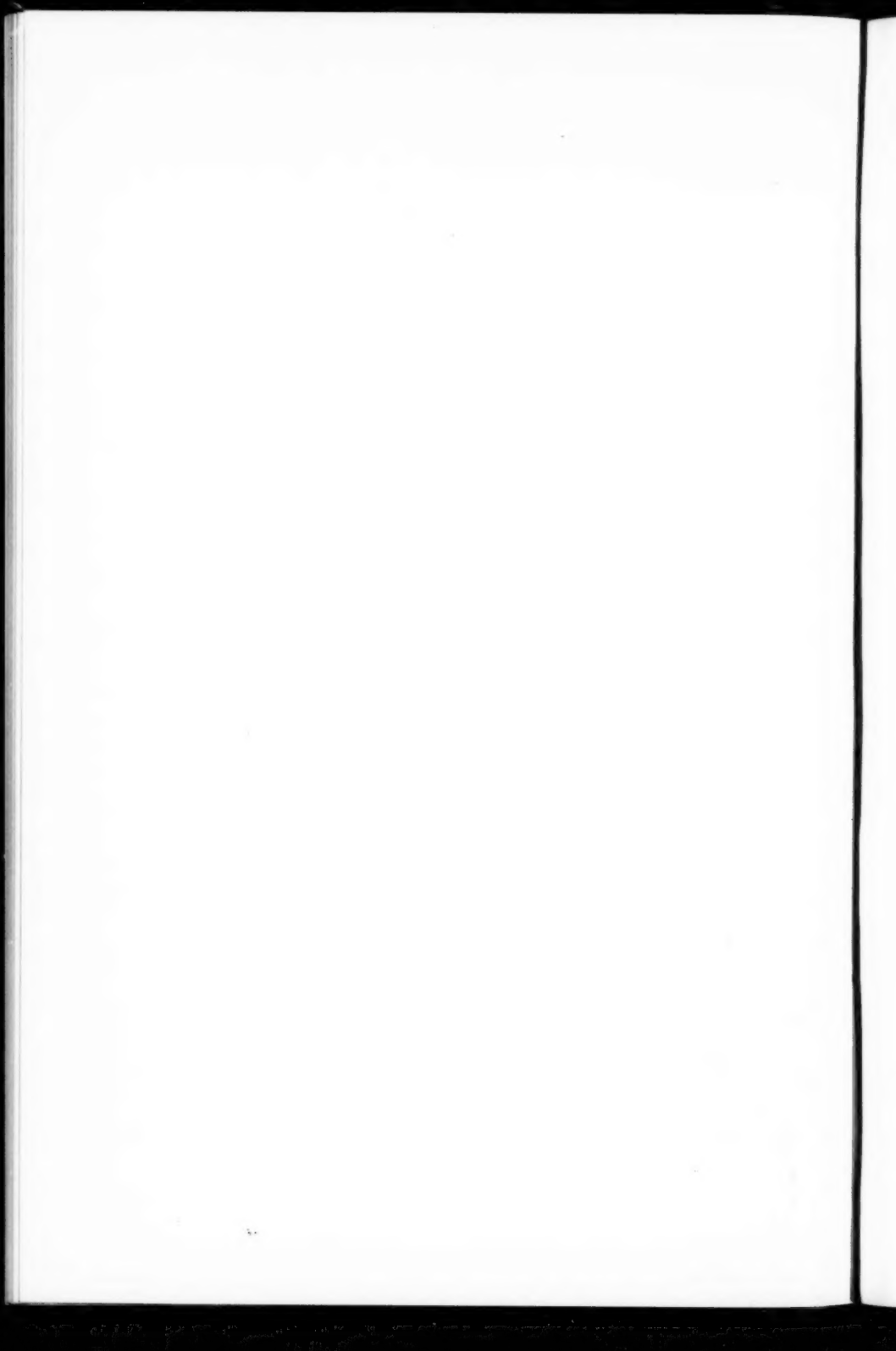
One of the most sensational developments in the world of the collector occurred at Christie's early in March, when the old mezzotint portraits brought together by the late Mr. Henry Arthur Blyth came under the hammer. Mr. Blyth, brother of Sir James Blyth, and a member of the firm of W. and A. Gibbey, is said to have formed his collection in the main some twenty to thirty years ago, when £40 represented the market value of a good mezzotint, and £200 was regarded as a phenomenal figure. Not since the Buccleuch assemblage was dispersed in 1887 has a series comparable in importance with the Blyth occurred in the sale-rooms. Of paramount interest to collectors were the 151 examples after Sir Joshua Reynolds. For these an aggregate of no less than £14,107 os. 6d. was cheerfully paid—about seven times as much as Mr. Blyth is deemed to have given for them, and, approximately, one hundredfold their issue price.

The art of mezzotint was introduced into this country in the second half of the seventeenth century. Actually the first dated example, I believe, is a portrait of Charles II., executed by William Sherwin in 1669. The process consists in raising a burr on the surface of a copper plate, this with an instrument



LADY BAMPFYLDE

From a Painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds



known as a "cradle," because it is rocked backwards and forwards. If an impression were taken from such a burred plate when it has been inked it would produce a mass of deep black. The mezzotinter, then, unlike the etcher, works from dark to light: his deepest shadows are where the plate has not been touched, his highest light where the surface has been smoothed and burnished. Few craftsmen of to-day themselves use the rocking tool; instead, they buy, at so much the square inch, a prepared or "burred" plate. It follows that in a pure mezzotint there are no definite lines; the effect is of velvety softness. About two centuries and a half after Ludwig Von Siegen discovered the process, its greatest exemplars brought it, as some think, to perfection in England. They translated into black and white the portraits of Romney and Reynolds and Gainsborough, the inimitable low-life pictures of George Morland. As to the æsthetic worth of these eighteenth-century mezzotints there is wide divergence of opinion. While, as we shall see, collectors willingly pay hundreds of pounds for a rare example, one of the ablest of our younger etchers remarked to me the other day that ten shillings was a fair money equivalent for their value as works of art.

We may pass at once to a brief consideration of some of the outstanding lots in the Blyth collection. The tabular statement (p. 195) will be read with surprise by all save those who have made a close study of the subject. The four mezzotints taken as a basis of comparison, and here reproduced, are those which fetched the highest amounts on March 11-12.

This table, for some of whose details I am indebted to Mr. Graves—joint author with Mr. Cronin of the valuable "*Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*"—reveals several startling facts. It will be seen that Sir Joshua received for the four original portraits less than one-fifth of the amount recently paid for four mezzotints after these portraits; and in this connection it must be remembered that whereas there is, or was, but one picture in each case, several score of the engravings were originally pulled, and each is far from being unique at the present day. It need hardly be said that these pictures have themselves greatly advanced in value since Reynolds painted them. To cite one

instance, Mr. Charles Wertheimer bought the Delmé group in 1894 for 11,000 guineas. Again, if the original issue-price of the mezzotints be compared with the sums paid for the Blyth examples, the appreciation is phenomenal—even the £1300 paid at the Buccleuch sale for Rembrandt's "Christ Healing the Sick," known as the "hundred guilder print" because he gave an impression to a dealer in exchange for prints by Marc Antonio worth about 800 francs, is relegated to a second place.

Title.	Engraver.	State.	Paid to Reynolds for Original Picture.	Realised for Engravings in March.	Issue Price of Engravings.
Duchess of Rutland	V. Green	First	£ 150 s. 0	£ 1050	£ 0 s. 15
Lady Pelham-Clinton . . .	J. R. Smith	First	100 0	987	0 15
Lady Betty Delmé and Children .	V. Green	First	300 0	966	0 15
Lady Bampfylde	T. Watson	1st publ.	157 10	924	0 15
			707 10	3927	3 0

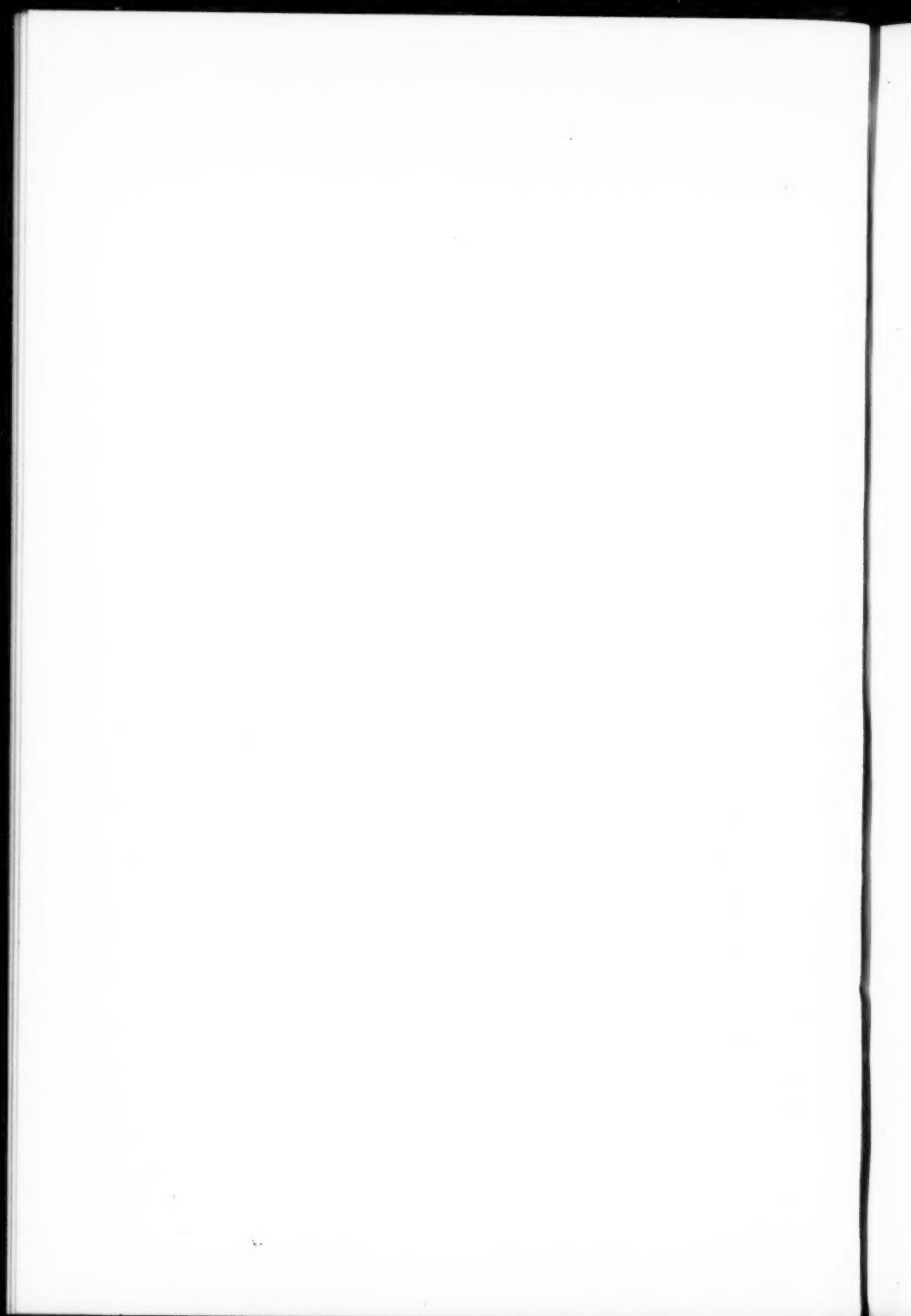
Art-collecting, generally regarded as a luxury, is on occasions a luxury that renders an astonishingly large money return. Although actual figures cannot be quoted, it is improbable that Mr. Blyth paid more than about £500 for the four engravings that brought almost eight times that amount. It may be noted, too, that even allowing for compound interest since 1790, there is a large surplus to the good. £3 accruing at five per cent, compound interest since 1790 would now have a value of about £360; in place of this the four mezzotints realised £3900 odd.

The three mezzotinters whose names appear in our table are among the most celebrated of their profession. Valentine Green, born 1739, was one of six Associate engravers of the Royal Academy—long ago the Academy has ceased to recognise the craft of the engraver—he was, too, engraver to the king. During forty years of activity he produced some four hundred



MARY ISABELLA, DUCHESS OF RUTLAND

From a Painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds



plates, or about one a month. The highest sum for which a mezzotint portrait had sold till the Blyth collection came under the hammer was for an example by Valentine Green—this in 1897, when "The Ladies Waldegrave" brought 560 guineas. Delicacy of grounding and refinement of touch characterise his works, and possibly because these qualities rendered the plates more than ordinarily susceptible to wear, and the engravings themselves to the effects of light, good specimens of the rarer of his portraits command extraordinarily high sums. John Raphael Smith, the "great apostle" of mezzotint, was first apprenticed to a draper. He was a jovial, happy-go-lucky fellow, on excellent terms with George Morland, a portrait of whom he painted and engraved. As to Thomas Watson, who must not be confused with his Irish-born contemporary, James Watson, "Lady Bampfylde" is the most eagerly sought after of his works, whether of those executed before or after he entered into partnership with William Dickinson at 158 New Bond Street.

During the thirty years that Sir Joshua lived at 47 Leicester Square—or Leicester Fields, as it was then called—he painted many of the celebrities of his time; and the curious may still see, in the auction-rooms of Messrs. Puttick and Simpson, the outward-bulging balustrade of the staircase up which powdered dames with huge crinolines mounted to his studio. Among these fair women were the four ladies represented in the engravings already mentioned. The Duchess of Rutland sat for Reynolds in 1780. According to Tom Taylor she told "Mr. F. Grant that Reynolds made her try on eleven dresses before he painted her 'in that bedgown.'" Doubtless, adds Tom Taylor, the "bedgown" was the dress with the least marked character about it. The picture was one of those destroyed in the fire at Belvoir Castle on October 26, 1816. Valentine Green's mezzotint was issued on July 1, 1780, and measures $23\frac{3}{8}$ inches by $15\frac{1}{8}$ inches. John Raphael Smith's rendering of Lady Catherine Pelham-Clinton—Mr. J. J. Shannon sends to this year's Academy a not un-Reynolds-like portrait group of two Pelham-Clinton boys in a landscape—as a little girl feeding poultry, measures 18 inches by $13\frac{1}{8}$ inches, and was issued on February 1, 1782. Lady Betty

Delmé and her two children were painted by Reynolds in 1777, and Valentine Green's mezzotint was published, from 29 New-man Street, on July 1, 1779. As to Lady Bampfylde, she sat to Reynolds in 1777, and in the same year the picture was exhibited at the Academy, a contemporary criticism being that, although fine in colour, the right arm is incorrect in drawing.

But the four examples to which so far we have confined attention by no means exhaust the riches of the Blyth collection. High prices had been anticipated, but the sums actually realised far exceeded the most extravagant estimates. In all eighteen mezzotints after Reynolds realised a minimum of 200 guineas each. The table (p. 197) gives details of these, with, when possible, mention of former price.

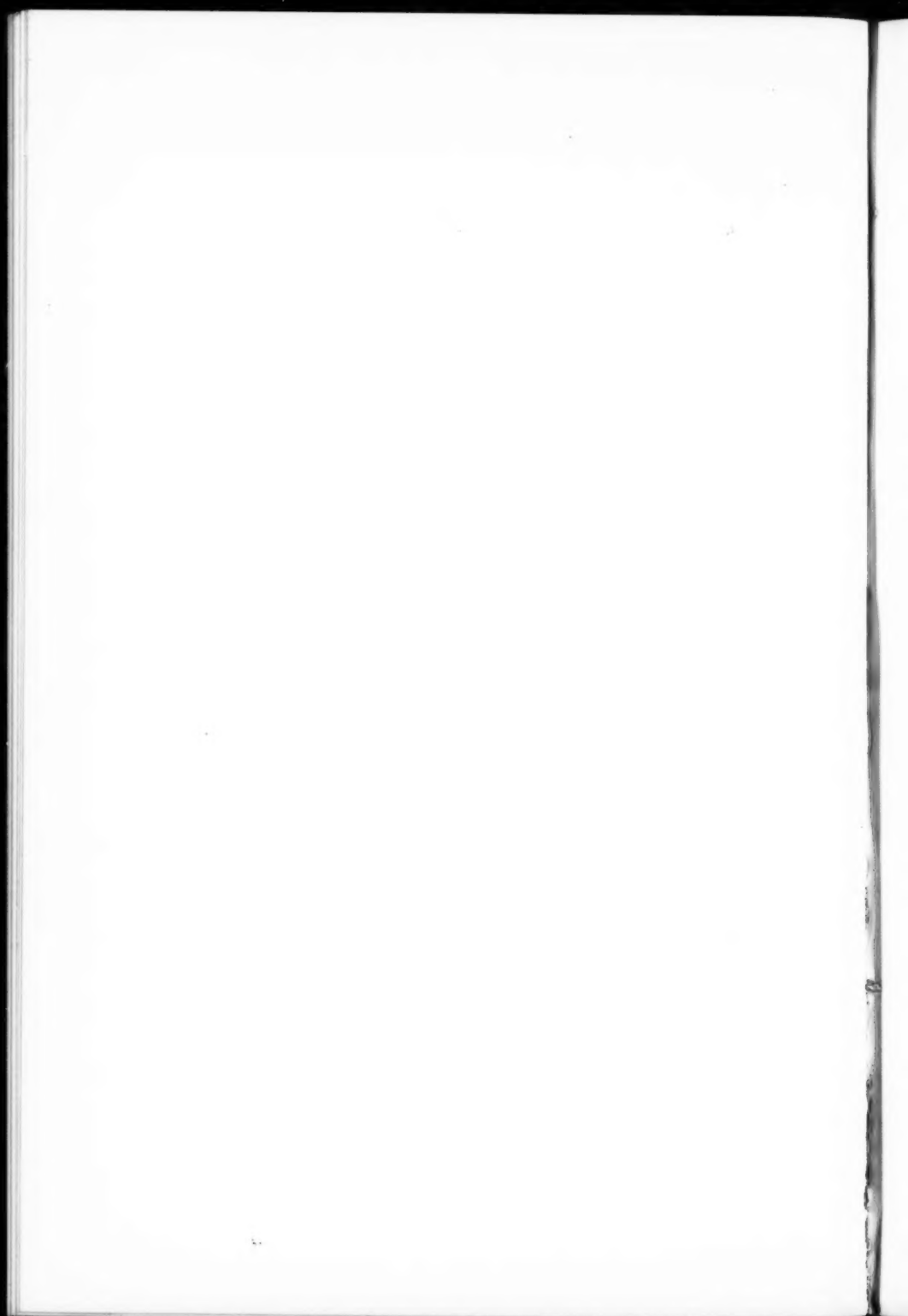
Thus eighteen mezzotint engravings, by seven artists, all after pictures by Reynolds, brought an average of £473 13s. 4d. each—an altogether unprecedented event, which for long will be remembered and quoted.

One question remains : have these eighteenth-century mezzotint portraits of women—and it will be observed that no presentment of a man appears in our list—reached their high-water mark of price, or are they destined still further to appreciate? It is impossible to say. In 1839 Mr. Wynn Ellis bought for 60 guineas Gainsborough's famous portrait of the "Stolen Duchess;" in 1876 Messrs. Agnew gave 10,100 guineas for it, only three weeks later to have the canvas cut from its frame. In 1775 Rembrandt's "Christ Healing the Sick" was to be bought for £7; to-day a fine example is worth £2000. In 1818 Dibdin unwisely prophesied that a first folio Shakespeare was never likely to bring more than 116 guineas; yet a copy has realised sixteen times that amount. Whether or not mezzotint portraits are to hold their position as objects keenly to be competed for in the sale-rooms depends on the whim of the collector. Perhaps a "Duchess of Rutland" may command 2000 guineas in the future, or possibly before the twentieth century has run half its course another vogue may have arisen, and the works of Valentine Green, John Raphael Smith, Watson, Dickinson, and the rest, have fallen relatively into the shade.



LADY CATHARINE PELHAM CLINTON

From a Painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds



Title.	Engraver.	State.	Price.
Duchess of Rutland. W. L. (Buccleuch, 1887, 125 gns.)	V. Green	First	Gns. 1000
Lady Catherine Pelham-Clinton. W. L. (Previous record, 300 gns.)	J. R. Smith	First wide margin	940
Lady Betty Delmé and Children. W. L. (Previous record, 240 gns.)	V. Green	First	920
Lady Bampfylde. W. L. (1893, 340 gns.)	T. Watson	1st pubd.	880
The Ladies Waldegrave. (Broadhurst, 1897, 540 gns.)	V. Green	First	500
Countess of Salisbury. W. L. (Barlow, 1894, 180 gns.)	V. Green	First	450
Hon. Mrs. Beresford, Mrs. Gardner, and Marchioness Townshend. (Broadhurst, 1897, 120 gns.)	T. Watson	First	440
Mrs. Musters. W. L. (1897, 102 gns.)	J. R. Smith	First	380
Mrs. Pelham, Feeding Chickens. W. L. (1900, fine example, 450 gns.)	W. Dickinson	Only	325
Duchess of Buccleuch and daughter. W. L.	J. Watson	1st pubd.	300
Lady Elizabeth Herbert and son. W. L.	J. Dean	First	300
Mrs. Payne-Galwey and child. (1897, 64 gns.)	J. R. Smith	First	290
Lady Elizabeth Herbert and son. W. L.	J. Dean	First	275
Lady Hamilton as a Bacchante. (1898, proof in brown, 35 gns.)	J. R. Smith	Proof, title open letters	240
Mrs. Sheridan as "St. Cecilia." W. L. (1896, 90 gns.)	W. Dickinson	First	240
Mrs. Musters as Hebe. W. L. (1897, £9)	C. H. Hodges	First	230
Countess Talbot. W. L. (1897, 70 gns.)	V. Green	First	210
Jane, Countess of Harrington. W. L. (Broadhurst, 1897, 285 gns.)	V. Green	First	200
			£8526

FRANK RINDER.

THE PUNISHMENT

I

THE Colonel seldom passed the club without going in to look at the telegrams, and he seldom went in without a nod and a word of civility to the Major.

They did not belong to the same regiment; in fact, neither of them at that present belonged to any regiment at all. The Colonel was, as any subaltern or captain would have told you, in the enjoyment of a "blokeship," and a scandalously over-paid blokeship "at that." Personally the Colonel was popular, but his official existence at £1200 a year was considered by junior officers not attached to his department as a blot on civilisation. As for the Major, he had no one to envy him, and certainly no one suggested that his affluence was aggressive. His rank was not departmental, but it had long ceased to be effective. He had, it was understood, been exceedingly smart once, and he had undoubtedly belonged to a regiment that was very smart still. But the Major's connection with the Blacks (as the Duchess of Argyle's Merthyr Tydvil Foresters delight to be called) had been abruptly severed in ages that, to subaltern officers, appeared pre-historic.

When the Major was in the Blacks it was the *chic* thing to wear drooping whiskers, and he wore them still in memory of those days, though he must have observed that the custom had grown obsolete.

If it is certain that no one envied the Major, it is doubtful whether any one pitied him. Perhaps he did not deserve much pity. Perhaps! Who of us knows enough to measure even our own deservings? Who of us cares enough to measure those of a seedy, broken-down, shabby anachronism? What everybody did know was that the Major's misfortunes were of his own making. He had been, to make no mystery of the matter, a

co-respondent in a certain case of divorce, and had been cast in heavy damages of which he had been unable to pay a farthing, and so he had been forced to fly from England and quit his regiment, which had only just returned there after a long course of service abroad.

It was said by some that, even if he had been able to pay up, he would have had to leave the Blacks ; that there were features in the case that even the Blacks could not swallow—and their gullet was not, in such matters, unduly contracted. Later on this view was rather discredited, and it was maintained that had the Major's financial state been better the co-respondence "wouldn't have mattered." Why he came to these islands no one could tell ; true, the regiment had been stationed here less than a year before, and at that time he was sure of finding many acquaintances in the place ; but under the circumstances that would appear but a doubtful advantage.

Perhaps he was confused in his mind, and had some foolish idea that the acquaintances were more than that—that he was returning to the indulgent compassion of sturdy friends who, conscious of certain imperfections at home, might be good-naturedly slow in casting stones abroad. If that were so, the Major's crude fancies were soon exploded.

Perhaps no masculine friends went the length of cutting him out and out, except the chaplain, and that the Major assured himself "was just professional" and meant nothing personal at all. They had been rather intimate in a mutually selfish, club sort of fashion, and had been wont to play billiards together almost daily : the parson played much better than the Major, and played for the stakes, while the poor Major had only played for the sport ; so on the whole the cleric had not lost by it.

Now parsons who are said to make a good thing out of their billiards can scarcely afford to bow to co-respondents with whom ill-luck may have brought them acquainted. And this, with rather intuitive than reasoned candour, the Major promptly recognised.

He, the Major, was quite a stupid man, and was scarcely ever wise or sharp enough to foresee anything ; but he understood accomplished facts with a simple frankness that is rarer than

it sounds. He never tried to misunderstand facts ; once seen, he took them for granted with a plain, unquerulous directness. He was not refined, not even sensitive, and when he found that he was "barred" he was rather surprised, but he never rebelled and never complained.

He was thick-skinned, to say the truth of it. As has been said, no one absolutely cut him (no man, that is) except the garrison chaplain ; but most were chilly and some were rude to him. One or two had a momentary difficulty in recollecting him ; one (Sharp of the Bank) affected on first meeting to mistake him for a brother officer, and alluded to his own case as a cursed bad business. But the Major recollected that Mrs. Sharp and he had been rather "sweet" on each other, and he felt no soreness at her husband's attitude. Of course he never tried to speak to him again, though they generally nodded once a day at each other, and after some years Sharp began to wish him a Merry Christmas when that salutation was in season.

With his usual plain appreciation of facts the Major was not long in arriving at the conclusion that there was a desire among these former friends of his to see him no more, and to be freed from his presence at the club.

But he did not think they would go the length of "kicking him out," and he would "stick it" if they did not.

Where could he go ? They did not know it, but he was nearly penniless.

II

ALL this was long ago.

If the Major had felt any wounds in this, the home of his friends, time had long dulled them. And if there had once been any idea of getting rid of him, that idea had been abandoned, and probably forgotten, years before Colonel Pontifex came to the islands as commanding ordnance officer.

The Major was as much an accepted fact in the club as the ship's figureheads that flanked the entrance, and was not much more obtrusive. The figureheads, especially the Amazon, were rather ugly and very shabby ; while they might strike the un-

accustomed spectator as improper; and obviously they were useless. But if their presence was irrelevant it had long been taken for granted, and so had the Major's.

In the morning he generally sat in the hall, well in the shadow of the staircase, where his seediness was as little apparent as might be, and where he was "handy to the bar, in case any one should stand him anything."

Of late years this had become very customary; and when the fleet was in, the Major would get almost more refreshment of that sort than he knew what to do with. If only he could have asked them for the money! If only they could have dropped it into his hand as if he had been a beggar!

Did any of them know, did any of them guess, how poor he was? How unfed, how starving? Some miserable pension or allowance he had, it is true. But hopelessly insufficient always, it had shrunk with the years and with the Major's poor, shabby, shrunken garments, and was now always in arrear.

Now and then some one did "stand him" a luncheon or a dinner; more frequently a supper—of grilled bones or Scotch woodcock. Did they guess that such a meal was often all the food he had had that day?

It was believed he fed "at home," for he had some obscure lodging somewhere, and would generally absent himself for half an hour at luncheon time and dinner time. And once it had really been so. The wretched meal he got from his landlady cost less even than the cheapest of the various lunches and dinners one could get at the club, though he had stuck to these as long as he could and cut them down as low as possible. But a lunch of bread and cheese at the club was more costly than a slice off his own loaf at home; and there was no club dinner less expensive than the soup, joint, and cheese, at one-and-a-penny (the *1d.* was "table-money"), which certainly could not be called unreasonable.

But now for some little time the Major had changed his quarters. He had fallen in debt to his landlady for these loaves of bread and pounds of cheese, as also for rent, for

washing, and other matters. And his pittance from England not arriving, she had lost patience. To do her justice she fancied that he had money and "drank it." Certainly he came home now and then with the influence of liquor very perceptible in his gait and utterance, in his haggard eyes, and half-pallid, half red-blotted complexion.

Had she known that the trifle of food he ate at home was all he got she would have understood his haggard looks, but he let her think that these were but extras, and that his regular meals were all taken at the club. Nor did it occur to her that what he drank was all given him. So, finally, this rather rough-tongued female lost patience, and declaring that a little loss was better than a big one, and that it was no use letting good money go after bad, she turned the Major out, to find quarters where he could.

It was not easy, and would probably have been impossible but for the Colonel's first kindness.

"If I send for my things—can I have them?" the Major had inquired rather falteringly, as the irate landlady closed her inhospitable door in his face.

"Things, indeed!" she snorted scornfully; "who'd want *your* things? Do you think I want to dress myself in your worn-out trousers and coats; or do you think any one would give me fivepence for the lot? Send for them, or come for them, or take 'em with you. It's all one to me!"

It was about eleven in the forenoon, and a bleak, cheerless day. The wind came biting at his shabby legs like a snapping terrier at a tramp's.

At the end of each sloping street lay the loud complaining sea, leaden, with white lacings; and the air was full of grit that pricked one's face like needles.

It was chilly in the hall of the club, and the figureheads outside looked more than ever forlorn with the glass doors shut in their faces. But the Major took his usual place; he had had nothing at all to eat to-day, and he felt cold to the bone; if any one should offer him a drink it would be more welcome than usual; if he could he would take the spirit almost

neat, that would warm him. But the fleet was away, and on such mornings as these there were not many visitors to the club before luncheon-time. Very likely he would get no offer.

"It's cold this morning, isn't it?" he remarked to the hall-porter.

"It's no use trying to light the fire here with a north wind," retorted the servant. "Why don't you go in the reading-room?"

The hall porter's tone was not respectful; but then he did not pretend to respect the Major, and the Major owed him five and sixpence, which the man considered was now overdue. Of course he knew perfectly well why the Major usually sat in the hall at this hour.

". . . there'll be nobody passing through such a mornin' 's this, will there, Bill?"

The barman laughed, and the Major realised that he had sunk yet another step. But he was not taken aback: it *had* to come and it *was* come; that was all.

With a dull patience he had accepted each new stage of his dishonour, blaming no one, neither God nor his neighbours, nor even himself. Perhaps a quite inaudible sigh did escape him on such occasions: perhaps a little blood did start towards his cheeks, but there was too little of it in his heart for such superfluities, and it never reached the skin, but dropped feebly back again.

Presently the hall-porter fell asleep; this he did on principle whenever there was nothing better to do, and the phenomena presented were rather dreadful. He had no neck, and his head grew out of the front of his body like a Prime Minister's. As soon as he was asleep he began choking, and through his chokes odd detached mutterings would break.

"Hover coat'n gnat!" "Yessir." "Hate. Heggs'n bacon."
"And ten, makes heven money."

The barman was brushing his own legs, and hissing as though he were at once a groom and a pony.

Outside the wind went blustering, now and then pausing to rattle a door or window-frame. It was one of those clear, bleak days when everything has a pitiless hardness of outline;

and the houses of St. George looked uglier even than the facts necessitated.

He grew so chilly that at last the Major crept off to the reading-room and sat down near the fire, which was crackling in a loud, unsympathetic fashion. At first the sudden exterior warmth made him feel colder, or made him perceive more plainly how cold he had been. His skin seemed to tighten, and he shivered strongly . . . When, at length, he heard the banging of the hall door as some one shut it after himself, he went out again.

It was the Colonel.

"Hulloa, Major! Rotten day, eh? Any telegrams?"

There was one to the effect that Her Serene Highness Princess Victoria of Hohengluckstein had been safely confined of a Princess, which, of course, was a great relief to the mind of the Colonel.

"We'll drink her health," he declared, with a ready appreciation of the personal possibilities of the news. "What shall it be, Major?"

The Major left it to him, and the Colonel let it be cherry brandy. Now in the club at St. George's one doesn't drink cherry brandy out of tiny liqueur glasses, but out of sherry glasses, so that the result is very comforting.

"I expect," said the Colonel, "it will snow as soon as the wind drops."

The Major thought of his boots and sighed a little.

"A biscuit with the cherry brandy, sir?" suggested the barman.

"No, thanky," said the Colonel cheerfully, conscious of grilled chicken, two poached eggs, and several ounces of bacon in course of digestion.

The Major nearly sighed again. It was a disappointment: a biscuit or two would have carried him on till evening. Still he had never counted on the biscuits, and he never dreamt of upbraiding Fortune for her scurvy trick in deciding the Colonel against them.

That officer tossed off his cherry brandy at one gulp as though it were medicine; and the poor Major felt that he must not

detain his host by dallying: he would have liked to sip it slowly, and wire draw its comfort over a quarter of an hour.

"Well, I was only passing. I'll carry on," said the Colonel, pocketing his change and nodding farewell.

He turned to the door and went out, the Major shutting it after him. As the Colonel went down the hill the Major looked after him through the glass; but presently brought his eyes nearer home as a piece of white rag was blown across the red tiles of the porch, and attracted them.

The rag caught against a pillar, and close to it, tilted against the pillar, as if it had rolled there, was a coin.

The Major stared at it, stared with as much incredulous fascination as if it had been the Philosopher's Stone or a Medusa's Head. It was indubitably a sovereign.

"Hate-thirty: homlet . . . and one makes twenty," gurgled the hall-porter.

"Pss! pss! pss!" hissed the barman.

The Major opened the door and went out, letting in such a blast as he did so that the Princess of Hohenglückstein's baby nearly blew away upstairs off the notice-board, and the hall-porter positively rocked in the gale. Outside the Major paused a moment, and stooped to pick a hair off the ankle of his left trouser leg. When he straightened himself again he had the coin in his hand.

Then he hurried after the Colonel.

"Colonel," he gasped, overtaking him, "do you think you've dropped a sovereign? Perhaps you've a hole in your pocket, or you may have pulled it out with your handkerchief. I found it just after you went in the porch." And he held the comfortable yellow coin out as though for the Colonel's identification. The Colonel felt in one pocket and found there the change he had just been given: gold he generally carried in the opposite pocket. As he felt there he discovered that there was indeed a small hole, some stitches having given way, and one of three sovereigns that had been there was missing. He was just about to say so when something in the haggard face that was watching him made him change his mind.

"I can't claim it," declared the Colonel stoutly. "You're sure you didn't lose it yourself?"

"Oh, quite sure," retorted the Major, almost blushing at the refinement of the compliment. "I'd better give it to the hall-porter," he added.

"That would do," said the Colonel, "or if I were you I should give it to some poor man, and if any fellow mentions having lost one, you can pay him back out of your own money. *I should certainly do that if I were you.*"

The Colonel was not a good dissembler, nor, for the matter of that, was the Major.

Their eyes met, and each found himself guiltily unable to sustain the direct glance of the other.

"No, don't give it to the hall-porter," concluded the Colonel.

"All right," said the Major, and he turned away; but he added something else in a lower voice that the Colonel scarcely caught, for the wind was very boisterous, and the Colonel was a bit deaf of the left ear. It did sound like "God bless you!" but who can say what it was? The north wind snatched the words from the speaker's lips, and flung them scornfully away, scornfully, one must suppose, for assuredly the Major's benedictions could have little worth. Scornfully, no doubt. For who in heaven would heed the bidding of such a one calling upon it to bless?

The Colonel took his way down hill into the town, and, for all his gouty walk and his rosy nose, I think he was some sort of relation of the Good Samaritan's.

"Poor devil!" he muttered; and that, too, was an oddly phrased valediction.

In the corner of the Colonel's eye there was a certain bright moisture that was, no doubt, due to the wind—or to the cherry brandy.

As for the Major, he went back to the club and awoke the hall-porter to pay him back his five-and-sixpence. That, he felt, was a luxury; the man did not in the least expect to be paid, and half a crown on account would have more than satisfied him, but unused as he was to luxuries the Major could not deny himself this one.

III

A GOOD deal of the afternoon was spent by the Major in the search for a lodging; and at length he found one. On payment of four weeks' rent in advance the landlady's obvious disinclination to receive him was overcome: and he was allowed to instal himself.

He had half a crown left, and that half-crown was the last money of which he was ever to have the spending.

It lasted thirty days, one penny being spent in bread each day.

On the fifth day he had a meal over and above the bread, and that meal also he owed to the kindness of the Colonel.

"I'm dining here," said the Colonel. "Are you?"

No, the Major was dining at home.

"Oh, I wish you'd send them a message and dine with me. I've a double-barrelled dinner ordered, for a fellow was to have dined with me, and now he's sent word he can't come. One can't eat two dinners, you know; I wish you'd have a split with me."

All this was in the hall of the club, and it took place about an hour before dinner time.

It was quite true that the Colonel had ordered dinner for two, but no one ever knew who was the guest that disappointed him, and no human messenger ever brought the message of excuse.

The truth was that since the episode of the sovereign the Colonel had had the Major much on his mind. Charity is always called feminine; but it is in reality bi-sexual, and one single charity is always very liable to breed another. Once you have allowed the charity microbe to get into your system it propagates alarmingly.

This little dinner-plot was intended as a very cautious and diplomatic way of taking soundings. The Colonel had not the least idea as to the depth of the Major's poverty, but he had begun to have horrible misgivings.

That the broken-down and seedy hanger-on of the club was poor of course every one knew, and any one could see for him-

self. But the look in the Major's eyes as he had held out that sovereign to the Colonel had let in a lurid light of conjecture into the latter's estimate of what poverty might perhaps mean.

Unfortunately for the Colonel's plan his intended *tête-à-tête* was a failure. Their table was big enough for four, and Bluff, of the Fisheries Conservancy, who came in late, asked leave to sit with them. The Major was always notably silent, and no one had ever yet heard him talk about his own affairs or himself; it was quite certain the Colonel would discover nothing to-night.

By ill-luck he was starting next morning on a tour of inspection round the other islands: and, as it turned out, spent a whole week at Prince Edward, where there was a wedding afoot and a masquerade ball, at which sort of festivities the Colonel was very great.

At Fort Anne there was nothing to tempt in the way of junketing, but the Colonel took a chill and was laid up for another five days; so that it was more than three weeks after his dinner before he got back to St. George, and the shops were already full of Christmas cheer, and the churches full of Christmas holly.

On the day of the Colonel's return the Major crept into the club, and the hall-porter noted that he came much later than of old, and noted too not without some rough pity, how ill he looked.

"He's got his Route, I'm thinking," observed the hall-porter to the barman.

They both thought the Major was out of earshot, but he turned and nodded to them.

"Please God!" he said, and went on into the reading-room.

There he sat, not reading much, but gazing into the red heart of the fire, with that dull patience that was, perhaps, his worst misfortune.

He felt less hungry than usual, but he knew that now it was not mere hunger that beset him; hunger is but a symptom: the disease was starvation.

Would that money *ever* come? He had got almost beyond

expectancy ; and he who has lost expectancy and hope—for him the bitterness of death is overpast.

And now he had come to ask himself a new question—would the Colonel come back to-day ? If he came back in time . . . *he would tell him.* Would he come in time ?

Beyond the reading-room of our club at St. George is the little garden-hall, which is chiefly used as a passage between the dining-room and the kitchen hatch. One can see into it from the reading-room through a glass half-door.

Presently the Major found that he had been dozing, and been roused by the passing of some one through the room, some one who had crossed the garden-hall into the dining-room, leaving the glass door a little ajar. The clatter of plates and knives could be heard as he passed into the dining-room ; then the door into it was closed and the sounds died away. The Major dozed again and for longer this time. When he awoke it was a quarter past two, and every one had finished luncheon. They were now all gone to smoke in the billiard or smoking-room.

He got up and leant with his back against the chimney-piece. He could see through the glass door into the garden-hall, and presently José—the Portuguese waiter, a weak-faced lad of nineteen—came out of the dining-room carrying a tray. The tray had plates on it, and some of these had broken food on them, gravy, scraps of vegetables, and on one quite a large piece of meat. Just as José came into the little hall an electric bell rang twice, and with an impatient toss of his head the lad put the tray down upon a chair and went through another door towards the smoking-room to see what was wanted. It was not ordinarily José's business to carry drinks to the billiard-room, but the waiter in charge of that room being sick, it was natural that his duties should devolve on the one who already had most to do.

The Major hesitated a moment or two, hesitated without deliberation ; and then even hesitation dissolved into desire, and he hurried to the refuse food and ate it wolfishly. Ah, how good it tasted ! the greasy, chilling gravy, the squashed and broken bits of cabbage and potato, the discarded shreds of fat

and skin and gristle. For more than three weeks he had tasted only bread, soaked in warm water with a little salt. To him this stolen meal was a banquet of delicious variety and piquancy.

"Oh! Oh! . . . Major!" It was José—José returned by another way, and taking the Major in rear.

The exclamation was wholly involuntary, and was simply of horrified, pitiful surprise. But to the starving wretch who heard it, it seemed menacing and dreadful, horrible. He turned guiltily, his knees shaking under him, the pallor of his haggard face turning yet more ashen, and he stammered, "Don't tell, José. . . . I couldn't . . . couldn't help it."

"Tell!" sobbed the boy. And at the sound of the voice the Major lifted his gaze to the lad's face; it was not a noble one, nor beautiful, not even very clean. The features were vague, and the contours weak and inconsistent. But the over-full, not very refined lips were trembling. Down the swarthy cheeks two large tears had already started, and in the sombre, inky eyes there shone a compassion that had no scorn, no criticism, no superiority, but unmixed, pitiful tenderness.

"Tell!" sobbed the lad; "no! no! no! Only forgive me for seeing; I never thought. . . ." And he seized the shaking hand that had stolen the refuse food, and kissed it.

For the last time in his life the Major blushed—the first time, too, perhaps, for many a year. . . . But the lad did not wait to see his blushes, even if he had been able to notice them.

"Come," he whispered, almost dragging the Major into the dining-room, empty of guests, and very full of the stale odours of eating. "Look!"

He almost pushed the Major into a chair and pointed to the plate beside it, where some one had left some pie-crust, to which a little meat adhered, and a little potato and gravy, now well skimmed over with fat. José longed to set a regular luncheon before the Major, and pay for it himself; but he durst not in his delicacy and respect.

IV

WHILE he ate José watched, but at such an hour there was no fear of any one coming near the dining-room, and when the pie was finished he brought the Major a slice of plum pudding.

Then the electric bell rang again, and they both left the dining-room.

In the outer hall Sharp, of the Bank, was standing, talking in his loud, fog-horn voice to the steward, while he stamped his letters.

"Well, Major," he called out, "the compliments of the season—if it's not too soon." And he held out a fat silver case stuffed with cigars.

"Take two, Major! Take two!" he urged, watching the Major's face as he spoke. And the steward watched too.

Soon the Major went out, and the steward shook his head as he watched him down the hill.

"The Major'll never pay another half-year's subscription," he said, "or I'm much mistaken."

"What is it?" inquired the banker, "drink, eh?"

"Maybe; but of late. . . . Well, I've begun, just these last days, to think it's not that so much as——"

"What?"

"Starvation."

"Good Gawd!" cried the banker, his jaw dropping in unfeigned horror. "But you can't mean such a thing!"

But it appeared the steward did mean it; at all events, he had begun just lately to have his suspicions.

Meanwhile, the Major passed out of sight round the corner, and for the first time for many years he took the turn to the left.

The other way led him "home," and led also to Union Street and Government Square; the little street to the left was the nearest way to the Bents, Fort Caroline, and the sea.

The Major had never been in the habit of walking on the Bents, and he could not have told why he went there to-day.

Fortunately, there was no wind ; it was a dull, leaden day, oppressed by a sort of threatening silence. The sea was grey-black, and the sky was nearly as dark as the sea. And yet it was not foggy : one could see the long cliff-line of Prince Edward far away to the north, and the lighthouse on Fort Anne. Coming from the latter was a steamer, heading straight for the Port of St. George. No doubt it was the *Lady Bruce* with the Colonel on board.

No one knows why they are called the Bents, perhaps because of the sparse, dry grass that helps to hold the windy sand together. They stretch for many miles along the shore, and they are lonely and desolate. Some sentimental colonists go and walk there because they say there is nothing then between you and England—only two thousand miles of empty sea. But the Major had never before indulged this sentiment. To-day he too lifted his eyes and turned them eastward, over the grey waste ; and for once a little sharp freshet of regret stirred the stagnant surface of his cold heart ; yes, over there was England.

As he walked along the seagulls swooped around, laughing shrilly. Knowing the sea as they do, there is always something ludicrous to them in the triviality of a man.

Besides the ugly laughter of the gulls there came, in rhythmic monotone, the flap of the sea, as it dropped, rather than broke, on the level shore. There was no other sound, and it seemed as if sea and land were death-frozen in a sad silence.

But the Major did not feel sad ; he was never introspective, and never asked inquisitive questions of himself ; but though ignorant of the reason, he felt that he was no longer sorrowful or unhappy. A sort of salve seemed to have laid itself on the whole wound of his misery—a salve, or, perhaps, it was more like an anæsthetic.

Nor was he lonely. In fact he had an odd sensation of having company ; there was nothing weird or terrible about this—nothing very supernatural. The supernatural was, indeed, out of the Major's plane. But it was quite certain that, while he knew he was alone, some one seemed to be walking beside

him, keeping pace with him, and, in some inexplicable way, relieving him of fatigue.

This sensation of being accompanied did not leave him, even when he returned to the town and his lodging, but remained with him to the end; only, as will be noted presently, the delusion took visible shape at last.

At his lodging he found a very cordial invitation from Mrs. Sharp, asking him to dinner "because it was Christmas Eve"; and while he was writing a reply her messenger returned to know if there was any answer.

About midnight the Colonel was still sitting with his pipe in his mouth, staring into the fire, and wondering what he should do for the Major. He was now definitely decided on taking the matter in hand, and casting shyness to the winds.

"It's no use letting a fellow starve out of delicacy for his feelings," he assured himself with belated perspicacity.

He had only got in just in time to go to the club and get dinner there; he looked about for the Major, and not seeing him, inquired.

"Oh," said the steward, "he's dining with the Sharps. Sharp told me he was asking him."

This news was some relief to the Colonel's tension of responsibility. But when he got home about eleven o'clock, he again let his mind occupy itself with conjecture as to what had better be done. And he was still busily considering when his landlady came up and said the Portuguese waiter from the club wanted him.

Any other night she would have been long in bed, but on Christmas Eve there was much to do, and she had not even finished her supper.

"I suppose you've got him outside there," said the Colonel, well acquainted with the good lady's expedients for saving herself "journeys" and trouble. "Let him come in. . . . Well, José, what on earth do *you* want? Come to look for your Christmas Box, eh?"

But there was a peculiar look on the lad's face that checked jocularity, a look that struck the Colonel as rather unearthly.

"What is it, my boy?" he asked in another tone, jumping up and knocking his pipe empty.

The lad could scarcely speak, but the Colonel did manage to make out that it was "the Major," and that he, the Colonel, was to go to him.

.

The street where the Major lodged was a poor one, in a poor neighbourhood, but respectable enough and quiet; the house was shabby and externally dirty, though, as it proved, clean enough inside.

On the landing outside the Major's room they were met by Mrs. Jugg, the landlady, who was dressed like an Ottoman in flowered cretonne with a good deal of pattern.

She was spherical in design, and could not be said to walk, but was projected through space by some mysterious motive force incomprehensible to the eye; her movement on her own axis being singularly free, and affording a good illustration of the precession of the Equinox.

José passed silently into the room, Mrs. Jugg receiving the Colonel with the mournful dignity of one who felt that there would soon be a corpse in the house. Mrs. Jugg's husband was still extant, and her family, though scattered, were all alive and well. A death in the house was a novel distinction, and her head was a little turned by it. Still, she welcomed the Colonel without hauteur.

"Poor gentleman!" she observed, "it's very kind 'n you, sir, to come and see 'im. He've mentioned you constant through bein' light-edded, and thinks the world and all of you. . . ."

In reply to the Colonel's queries she informed him that the Major came in about dusk, that might be four o'clock, or perhaps one minute and a half after four. Mrs. Jugg appeared to be beset by the idea that she was on oath, and affected a laboriously conscientious accuracy of detail. On getting in he had found an invitation to dine out, which he had accepted. The dinner was to be at half-past seven, and at twenty-nine minutes and a quarter after six the Major had called for a little hot water.

" . . . And I gave him three half-pints, sir," whimpered the landlady, "in the blue jug with the roses on."

"Was it to drink?" inquired the Colonel, misled by her emotion and the insistence on detail.

"No, sir. No. It wasn't to drink, not to my knowledge. It were to shave in and wash, to the best of my knowledge. I wouldn't swear it, sir; no, sir, but that's my conviction, it were at the time, and it is still."

"Hadn't we better go in?" suggested the Colonel, with some reasonable impatience.

"One moment—if you please, sir. Before you go in, it's jew to hus, to Jugg and me, as you should learn azackly what perceded your arrival, then you can swear to what may foller."

Colonel Pontifex looked rather likely to swear at what was actually taking place, and Mrs. Jugg perhaps perceived some such symptoms, for she did try to condense and simplify her style a little.

At thirty-three minutes past seven Mrs. Jugg had thought it odd that the Major should not have started.

" . . . For it's a good step to Mr. Sharp's, and I knew (poor gentleman) that *he'd* never have a cab—leastways, a Nackney Cabriöly. So I just sent Jane Eliza to tap at his door and ask if he hadn't rung, tho' he niver did ring for nothing, as wasn't to be expected for three shillings a week and no attendance. But Jane Eliza come down and stuck to it as the Major were gone out, which he could easily have gone through the passage and us not hear him, for he walked that quiet."

It was not till a message came from Mr. Sharp's expressing his surprise, and "'opin', with his compliments, as the Major weren't unwell, as we discovered the pore gentleman lying on 'is bed arf asleep and arf unconscious. . . . Of course, it didn't niver accur to Jugg, nor yet to me, as he really were ill, but Jugg says, 'Drink, Selina, you depend.' 'And Christmas Eve,' says I, 'and not the first time neither.' So we just sends a verbial message as how the Major were indispose.d with his compliments and those of the season, and Jugg said, 'Let him sleep it off,' as seemed (I will now allow) best to me likewise; so he slep on undisturbed till eleven or night, when that Portu-

gee from the club come to our front door with a basket (as you may see the same still, and identify it for your own satisfaction) full of all manner, and said it were for the Major, and I told him he'd better just carry it up and leave it houtside the Major's door if it was as he wouldn't take it in, for I was (and I won't deny it) tying up the pudding, besides not being customary for me to wait on him, apart from me being stout, and so he just went up wi' it, and down he comes running agin, as white as a quilt, declaring the Major was dying, and up I went wi' him, and dying *he* was and is. God forgive us all, for as plain as your face, sir, I sees it now, he's starved 'isself to death, all along of our putting it all down to the drink, as was, alarst ! the character folks give him, tho', had we known, he should never have died for the want of a mince pie, or a slice of pork and greens of a Christmas Eve, which certingly do carst a gloom, as you may say, over the Annie Verzy. But really, sir, we'm not crool-arted folks, tho' pore, and foarced to look arter our own, like our betters, and no offence to you, sir ; and it do cut me to think of the poor gentleman starving to death, as you may say, in the lap of plenty . . . for you see, sir, as we never guessed but what he took all his meals up to the club, and now that Portugee declares that never a bite or sup there did he get but what was gave him by charnst when any gentleman thought fitting to invite him, and that scarcely ever, the lad do say. . . ."

Fortunately for Colonel Pontifex at this point her defiance of punctuation and the ordinary rules of respiration told on her, and Mrs. Jugg broke down, and could no longer resist his efforts to pass her.

The room was very small, and contained only a very few wretched articles of furniture. There was, as Mrs. Jugg pleaded apologetically, "no fire-grate, else she'd have soon put a bit of comfort like into the place." Certainly there was no comfort as it was. The bed was dingy and miserable, the walls damp-stained and dirty ; the very smell was cold and depressing.

But the Major was past all reach of the squalid influences of poverty ; he was in bed, propped up rather than lying, and his

face already reflected the lights of a happy dawn. The haggard lines seemed to have been smoothed away, the ugly contrasts of red and pallor to have blent into a flush that was like a sleeping child's. The dull, patient eyes were dull no longer, and even their patience was lighted with a rising gleam of hope.

The Colonel's indignant compassion faltered, and he felt falling upon him the awe of things beyond his experience or understanding. Had he been a self-conscious man he would have felt himself at fault whether to tune his mind to pity or to envy.

Close beside the Major, half supporting him, sat José, with no eyes for any one else, and it seemed that the dying man also had no sense of any other presence.

For a little while the Colonel watched them, and there was no sound but the periodical recurrence of Mrs. Jugg's unbridled emotion. Neither José nor the Major seemed to hear it. Presently he spoke.

"Open it," he said, pointing a trembling finger at the window, and the Colonel softly moved to carry out his wish, without his seeming to notice that it was not José who had done it.

The night was chill, but scarcely more chill than the wretched little room, and there was not a breath of wind.

"They're beginning," said the Major. "I can just hear them—and now ours will start."

From over a thousand leagues of empty sea there came to his dying fancy the ringing of the Christmas bells from his own midland village.

Presently he turned and felt beneath his meagre pillows.

"She *can't* have forgotten," he said patiently. "She *always* puts something. She never would forget."

José slipped under the pillow a shabby brass crucifix.

"Feel again," he whispered, and the groping fingers obeyed.

"I knew she would put something," and the weak fingers closed on the cross, and held it to the end.

"It's my birthday . . . as well," he added with a little smile, "and she always puts something."

Mrs. Jugg sobbed undisguisedly, and kindly explained that he was talking, poor lamb, of his mother.

"Just now," she affirmed, "whiles the young man was gone for you, sir, he kep' thinking as *I* were her."

Somehow the Colonel experienced a difficulty in crediting this instance of disordered fancy.

But, oddly enough, his imagination followed very simply the guiding of the dying words. It was not so impossible as you would think for him to see in yonder stranding wreck the brown-curled boy of forty years ago.

"My birthday, too, and I'm thirteen," said the quiet voice, "and to-day I went with her to church."

"Poor thing," said Mrs. Jugg officiously, "he kep' saying that afore, and I thought maybe as he'd wish to see the minister and take the saikryment, perhaps. But he said he'd rather not trouble no one; so while the Portugee lad was a-fetching you, sir, I just gave him a mossel o' bread and a sup o' port wine out of my William's prize cup, as is just the right shape, and, of course, we don't never use it. . . . He never noticed the difference, bein' wand'ring, and he took it as gentle, as gentle . . . if it did'n no good, it could do 'im no 'arm, and it pleased 'im."

Then even her voice was overpowered by the great silence into which the only voice José's ears were strained to hear was sinking.

Raising himself the Major turned and looked, smilingly, in the lad's face; and then, lifting one of the lad's hands, he scanned it closely.

"Even the scar's healed?" he asked earnestly, and José uttered never a word, but the sob rose higher in his throat.

"'E's light-edded," whispered Mrs. Jugg, "'e was before. 'E took him for one. . . ."

But something in the Colonel's face, as he turned it to her, made her stop.

For a minute there was such silence that one could hear the far-off rustle of the sea. Then again the Major spoke, still fastening his eyes on José's face.

"Forgive!" he said, "the wound is healed." And lifting the lad's hand he kissed the palm.

"It is not *my* hand he kisses, *really*," said the boy, his voice monotoned in passionate tension. "He is making up his quarrel."

As he spoke he did not turn his head or look at them.

Then again that other patient voice shook on the stillness of the listening night.

"*Forgive!*" it urged, "*I never asked till now. I . . . just . . . took my punishment.*"

Surely this was not José's voice that answered, "*It is all forgiven long ago—without asking.*"

The voice that spoke was fearless in certainty, vibrating with unfathomed tenderness, steady with inspired conviction. . . . And as it ceased, the silence seemed to quiver with its reverberation.

Mrs. Jugg scarcely exaggerated when she said that "the funeral subsequies were suverb." And the Colonel paid for them.

They were an offering to the of *lares et penates* his own somewhat troubled conscience, as well as an expiatory sacrifice to the shade of the departed.

It really was the most talked-of funeral there had been in the Islands since that of Sir Hercules Blundersmith, and a colony so seldom has the opportunity of paying its governor these sort of compliments that naturally the opportunity was made the most of.

The Major's funeral was quasi-military, though, of course, every one's attendance was voluntary, but the other elements, Navy and Civil Government, Public Works, Prisons and Fisheries, were fully represented. The fleet, as it happened, came in the day before, and the Colonel boarded every officer and generally obtained a promise of attendance.

The club sent a wreath exactly like a lifebuoy, and Mrs. Jugg sent one made of white beads very like a mat to stand a lamp upon. José sent no wreath, but he asked that his little cross might be left in the Major's hand and buried with him.

As the Colonel had been at the whole expense of the funeral, the club, army and navy, subscribed for a gravestone; but the inscription had to be altered while in course of execution, for news came from England of the sudden death of the Major's cousin, Sir Percy, of apoplexy, after a complimentary dinner at the Pork Butchers' Company. Sir Percy's death took place four-and-twenty hours before the Major's, and as the Baronet was childless our poor friend was his heir—and succeeded him though he never knew it.

On receipt of this intelligence several persons doubled their subscriptions, and a plinth was added to the tombstone.

JOHN AYSCOUGH.

LONDON AND ITS CENSORS

LONDON has had its dithyrambic extollers, its Johnsons and Lambs, but its censors are also pretty numerous, and a cento of their views makes lively reading. They see nothing to admire in "The City of the Pea-soup-coloured Gown," as the late Mr. Grant Allen epigrammatically termed it. The article from which we excerpt this definition was published in the *Fortnightly Review* some seven years ago, and is a mordant indictment of Cockaigne which Mr. Allen would appear to have considered the ugliest city in Europe, thus going further even than Mr. Richard Whiteing, author of "The Island" and "No. 5 John Street," who has dubbed it the ugliest bar Madrid. Mr. Allen also, in his derisive paper, "Beautiful London," calls it "a squalid village," and pokes the most vigorous fun at "the *rond point* of Ludgate Circus," at "the Kensington boilers," at "Mr. Peabody sitting down to have his boots blacked behind the Royal Exchange," at "Queen Anne ordering tea in front of St. Paul's, and King George exhibiting his wig-maker's skill near the Senior United Service."

In one of his novels Mr. Allen terms Modern Babylon "seething, grimy, opulent, squalid, hungry, all-embracing London." Heine would have found this writer a congenial spirit, for the ethereal Teuton could discover nothing in our metropolis but fogs and porter. Shelley thought Hell a place very like London, "A populous and a smoky city." At least so he tells us in "Peter Bell the Third." He also calls it—

London, that great sea, whose ebb and flow
At once is deaf and loud, and on the shore
Vomits its wrecks, and still howls on for more.

To De Quincey it seemed "a stony-hearted step-mother," to Cobbett "a great wen," while Taine thus describes "Sunday in London in the rain": "The shops are shut, the streets almost

deserted ; the aspect is that of an immense and well-ordered cemetery. The few passers-by under their umbrellas, in the desert of squares and streets, have the look of uneasy spirits who have risen from their graves ; it is appalling."

A captain of New York police who visited us last summer, and whose opinion was much quoted, thus remarks anent "The City of Masts—Horrible London" :

There is a scarcity of ice.
There is a superfluity of women.
There are nothing but bad cigars.
There is not a first-class bootblack.
The barbers don't know how to shave.
This about states all there is to be told about London.

The church dignitary who has been recently condemning Chicago is not more severe.

Then here are three more derogatory descriptions of note. The first appeared in *Punch*, and London is addressed in burlesque of the Masque of London performed at the Guildhall.

Absorbed in bargains, busy in the Mart,
We see thee blind to beauty, deaf to art.

"The keynote of London life is Cain's question, 'Am I my brother's keeper?'—the capital of the universe is a City of Cain." "The metropolis is not an organism ; it is an inorganic, amorphous conglomeration of atoms of isolated humanity, without healthy relations, without more knowledge of each other than is possessed by the particles of sand with which the wind sometimes overwhelms an encampment in the desert." Then hear John Ruskin's deep bass which so disturbed "the young painter" of Mr. Harrison's latest book : "That great foul city, rattling, growling, smoking, stinking, a ghastly heap of fermenting brickwork, pouring out poison at every pore."

Finally, contrast all the above with the following ecstatic eulogy of "gay Lutetia" in Ouida's "A Provence Rose." "City of Pleasure you have called her, and with truth ; but why not also City of the Poor ? For what city, like herself, has remembered the poor in her pleasure, and given to them, no less than to the richest, the treasure of her laughing sun-

light, of her melodious music, of her gracious hues, 'of her million flowers, of her shady leaves, of her divine ideals? . . . Oh, world! when you let Paris die you let your last youth die with her! Your rich will mourn a paradise deserted, but your poor will have need to weep with tears of blood for the ruin of the sole Eden whose sunlight sought them in their shadow, whose music found them in their loneliness, whose glad green ways were open to their tired feet, whose radiance smiled the sorrow from their aching eyes, and in whose wildest errors and whose vainest dreams their woes and needs were not forgotten."

ARCH. GIBBS.

SONNET

WHAT we have seen we fancy all must know,
And chafe at their unstudied questioning:
And like returning swallows on the wing,
Which see Algeria's plains and mountain snow
And the blue Midland Sea and France below,
And towns, fields, woods and streams in a fair ring
Of broad horizon, yet are loth to sing,
But only twitter sitting in a row,
Unable to express to other birds
The world's great size and beauty, in despair
Of giving feeling utterance, while the lark
From one small field bids all the country hark
To his sweet tale, told and retold with prayer;
So travellers feel the impotence of words.

E. H. THOROLD.

A PRIEST OF MAHADEV

A FEW miles from the spot where the waters of the sacred Krishna leap into the valley of the Western Ghâts, the river shallows and widens, forming a delta of islets in the bed of the stream. This place, in the fair season, was the resort of numerous pilgrims who sought to wash away transgressions and to make clean their consciences in the holy waters ; and here, within half a mile of the south bank of the Krishna, centuries ago, a small town had sprung up which had acquired a reputation for extreme sanctity. Shivpur, which consisted of a number of rickety, tumble-down houses, intersected by narrow, unpaved, tortuous streets, stood on an extensive plateau, and the town was surrounded by acres of rich temple lands which stretched from the river bank towards the horizon.

On the north side of the river the ground rose in rugged precipices and range upon range of hills. A low masonry bridge spanned the stream, and beyond this the highway, after creeping upwards, entered a defile ; the fortress of Raogadh crowned the eastern summit and dominated the entrance to the pass. Both banks of the river were crowded with temples, whose steps buried themselves in the crystal waters, while sanctuaries dedicated to numerous Hindu deities were raised on the islets which dotted the stream.

One of the larger sanctuaries was dedicated to Mahadev (the great god). Its square stone roof, sloping gradually towards the sides, was supported on eight high slim columns, whose capitals were ornamented with figures of the god, in his various incarnations, male and female. The temple was the favourite resort for worship of the Mahratta soldiery who garrisoned the mountain fortress of Raogadh.

At the time of our story the spiritual head of this temple was a Brahmin named Tukaram. A tall, lean man, with deep-set eyes and sunken cheeks ; his heavy moustache, beetling brows,

and the tuft of hair on the crown of his otherwise shaven head, were grey, and heightened the gauntness of his appearance.

His presence was dignified, his manner courteous ; a soft, silvery voice and a winning smile charmed his audience and encouraged their confidence. A deep thinker, Tukaram had passed through the purifying fires of sorrow and of doubt with a spirit unbroken and ardour unquenched. He became a reformer. The tales of amorous deities and the orgies of gods and goddesses he cast aside as parasites which through centuries had clustered around a pure religion and had become incorporated in its doctrine. He rejoiced in his Brahmin birthright, and was proud of his ancient faith, yet he felt that if Brahminism was to maintain its supremacy, the people must be brought into active sympathy with their faith. He was the people's friend, a friend of liberty, a liberty which compels self-denial, a liberty of high aims, "a perfect yoking with the Deity."

The season of rains was over and the gods had been kind. Evidence of rich harvests gladdened the heart of man, and the humbler creation seemed to rejoice in the brightness of the prospect. A crowd of men and women, old and young, priests, soldiers, musicians and mendicants, were making their way from the shore to Mahadev's temple. Garlands of fresh flowers had been placed round the neck of each kneeling bull ; trays of silver and brass, on which were exposed rich clothing, sweetmeats in tinsel, flowers, cocoa-nuts, and sacred oils and pigments were being conveyed over the stream. The splash of waters, the mingling of bright raiments, the laughter which greeted some too eager youth who, losing his foothold, found himself drifting out of his depth ; the careless gossip, the sense of joy, all spoke of a holiday.

The occasion was the marriage of a god. The bride was a maiden over whose head thirteen summers had barely passed. Tani was an orphan. On the death of her father the child and her mother had been received into the house of an only uncle. The widow did not long survive her husband, and from the time that she was five years old the girl had been under the care of her uncle and his wife. Bright, passionate, and impulsive, she had won her way into the hearts of the childless

couple. She inherited from her mother large dark eyes, raven hair, a graceful carriage, a ready wit, and quick intelligence, and many and fervent were the prayers for her welfare which followed the dainty little maid as she tripped past her neighbours.

Dhondhu, her uncle, was a small farmer. Like most of his class, he was steeped in hereditary debt; yet not only had he not shirked the burden imposed upon him, by custom and religion, in accepting the guardianship of the child, but the couple often sacrificed their personal comfort in order to obtain some delicacy or toy for the young girl.

In due course the question of her marriage had to be considered, and, though the maid was dowerless, there were many willing to welcome her into their homes.

Of her numerous suitors, two only concern our story.

The first was Rama, a youth about eight years her senior. He had once been her playmate, and was always her champion. Recently he had been appointed a *naik*, or petty officer, in the Mahratta cavalry. An accomplished swordsman, a daring rider, and a keen athlete; strong and supple, the son of a soldier, he had inherited all a soldier's instincts.

The name of the other suitor was Damodhar. A man about fifty years of age, though he looked a good deal older. His first wife had been dead about two years. Damodhar was by profession a grain dealer and a money-lender. A hunchback, with a low forehead, bloodshot, greedy eyes, and a large mouth; three long teeth protruded from his upper gums and gave him his nickname—the wolf. Dhondhu had had business relations with Damodhar, and latterly they had become very intimate; advances of grain had been easy to obtain, and bonds had been renewed on favourable terms. Damodhar's proposals for Tani were both flattering and liberal. Not only did he express his willingness to pay all the heavy expenses incidental to the marriage, but in addition he offered to surrender to Dhondhu certain overdue bonds which were in his possession. Small wonder that the debt-sodden cultivator gloated over proposals which would not only secure a wealthy husband for his niece, but would also afford him substantial relief. But his wife had her misgivings and distrusted Damodhar. She, poor woman,

was the household drudge—hers it was to exercise all the petty economies which their poverty entailed, and often did her soul pine for relief. But she was suspicious of Damodhar's generosity. There were other debts, and before the next harvest they would need both seed and money. For these they would have to go to Damodhar, and having got possession of Tani, what guarantee was there that he would continue to be liberal? Naturally grasping and unscrupulous, would he not seek to compensate himself in the future for his present generosity? These arguments she set before Dhondur. But she had other misgivings, which she refrained from utterance. She loved her niece. What happiness would there be for the child in Damodhar's home? True, he was wealthy, but he was notoriously a miser—cruel and despotic.

But Dhondur, dreaming of prosperity and ease to come, brushed aside the woman's fears, angrily bidding her hold her peace.

So one day, when Tani ran into the house fresh from play, and with no thought of marriage in her mind, Dhondur told her of her approaching betrothal to Damodhar.

"What, *that* ugly hunchback?" she exclaimed, greeting the announcement with peals of childish laughter. Then, catching sight of her aunt's face, she flushed, grew pale and silent. She retired to her room, angry, hurt, and with a pained sense of impending disaster, to which she could scarcely give definite shape. Late in the afternoon she espied Rama passing the house on horseback, and, regardless of consequences, she rushed into the street, and, in a few breathless sentences, told him of her fate. Then came understanding. As the pair gazed into each other's faces, the light was kindled in the eyes of the young trooper, and Tani blushed and sank her head. Rama's eyes glittered as those of a cobra about to strike. But before he could speak, Dhondur interrupted the interview; his niece was betrothed, and it was not meet that she should be seen of men: she must return at once. Rama bent down, and lightly touching her shoulder, he whispered, "Courage, little one, that sucker of blood shall never have thee."

A moving cloud of dust enveloped horse and man as she

looked up. With blood pulsating at the light she had beheld in Rama's eyes, the touch of his hand, and the hope his lips had uttered, she re-entered the house, deaf to Dhondu's reproof.

The future bridegroom may not see her again until the marriage, and for this respite she was grateful, since, for the present, she was free from his repulsive presence. But the time would soon pass—and then?

Long into the night the child lay awake, bemoaning her fate, and weary and sorrowful her aunt found her in the morning. The elder woman's sympathies were stirred, and with words of encouragement she endeavoured to alleviate her grief. The neighbours flocked to offer congratulations, but Tani caught mockery in their tones and glances, and made no attempt to restrain her tears.

Tukaram came to the house on the following day. As the family priest, he had been summoned to fix an auspicious moment for the ceremony. Dhondu was still in the fields, and the two women sat together. Dhondu's wife had given the matter much anxious thought, and her repugnance to the marriage grew as she dwelt on the subject. Both women saluted the old priest, and the elder was a silent witness of the recital of her woes, which the sobbing girl poured into the friendly ears of the priest. Patiently Tukaram listened to her story. When she had recovered her self-control, and had ceased to speak, he endeavoured gently to reason with her, dwelling on the duty, obedience, and affection which she owed to her uncle.

Suddenly, moved by a strong impulse, the aunt interrupted the exhortation.

"Duty? Obedience? What words are these? What is her duty to the man who seeks to sell her body in order that he may rise to affluence? Is her happiness nothing? Is she to become the slave of a human fiend? to gloat over the wealth he has wrung from the hands of men who labour in poverty and squalor? Is she to know no other companionship; no joy but the accomplishment of his vile ends? Can duty or obedience give consolation in the oppression of fellow men? Is this all you can urge, oh! father?"

The old man shook his head sadly and exclaimed: "The

gods have written our destiny on our foreheads. What they have decreed must surely come to pass."

In fierce anger the woman rose from her seat; her eyes flashed, her lips curled, and her hands were clenched.

"Destiny," she breathed, "the refuge of the coward and the impotent—the merchandise of false priests. Riches gained by fraud—the fruit of patient toil wrung from the hands of peasants—are used to purchase the good-will of Brahmins who simper 'Destiny.' Kings rob their subjects to magnify their dignity, and if only some of the loot finds its way to the temple, the priests shout 'Destiny.' And woman—what is her destiny? To open her arms to the man who, with poison in his eyes and corruption in his heart, seeks to purchase her with gold. Shame on you priests, who speak in the name of gods but to pander to the wealthy and the powerful. Instruments of unrighteousness, and preachers of a faith which is dead. I—a woman—cry shame!"

Her passionate appeal affected the priest. He was silent and thoughtful. Then, rising, he passed his hand over his brow and muttered to himself: "It may not be—this marriage. Surely it were a sin both against nature and against God."

Eagerly Tani caught at his words, and clasping her hands she fell on her knees before the priest.

"Free me from this man, oh! father, and gladly will I devote my life and my heart to the worship of Mahadev and of thee."

The man fell back a pace or two and his voice was stern.

"I am but a humble minister of the great God, and desire no service: let thy worship be to Him alone."

But the girl advanced and clung to him with tearful entreaty.

"Do not forsake me, oh! father, in my weakness; let me have thine aid. Only show me the way—free me from this unhappiness, and let me be thy disciple."

There was a pause while the priest caressed the head which the child in her sorrow had flung against his bosom. When he spoke his words were very solemn.

"Be seated and listen. It is no easy path which I would show thee." His face kindled with enthusiasm and rapture as he put the question:

"Art thou able to fix thy heart and thy thoughts on God alone; to empty thyself of passion and thy mind of anxious thought; to purify thy soul, and in deep meditation withdraw from all things sensual: living only to and for thy God?"

Perhaps it was the sense of relief; perhaps the girl had caught some of the old man's enthusiasm. She bowed her head and, scarcely understanding her answer, said in a voice which did not rise above a whisper, "I am able."

The aged priest stretched out his arms in benediction.

"Thy life shalt thou consecrate to the glory of Mahadev, and as a bridegroom shall he rejoice over thee."

The door opened, and the sunlight which flooded the apartment seemed to breathe fresh life and hope. Tukaram was gone, but, knowing the influence he possessed, the woman felt comforted. And so it came to pass that Dhondu's dreams were dissipated; but he hoped that as he had surrendered his niece to Mahadev, he might receive some special mark of favour from the god.

To Rama the knowledge of Tani's deliverance from Damodhar's clutches was an immense satisfaction. He would, of course, have preferred to wed the girl himself, but his respect for the priest and his loyalty to Mahadev were above his own desires.

Only Damodhar the grain merchant resented the interference of the priest: he gnashed his teeth in impotent wrath and vowed vengeance in his heart.

And so on the day fixed for the marriage Rama brought his own charger, a fine Deccan mare, for Tani's use; the saddle and trappings, heavily ornamented with silver, had been borrowed from the king's treasure house. Attired in a *sari*, or petticoat, of pale green muslin and a crimson bodice of cloth of gold, Tani held in her right hand a long curved dagger. This represented the bridegroom. Rama led the mare, and as Tani bent forward now and again to caress the creature's sleek neck the eyes of the pair would meet below the veil of pearls.

As the procession advanced Rama took off his waistbelt, a purple square of silk with a border of deep orange. Passing it to the girl, he said quietly, "Keep it for my sake. If you

should be in danger send the handkerchief to me ; my sword will ever be at your service." Tani's eyes filled with tears, but she forced a smile as she slipped the cloth into her bodice. At the water's edge the party halted, and Rama, lifting the maiden on to his right shoulder, slowly and with sure footsteps strode in the direction of the temple.

Six months had passed since the ceremony at Mahadev's temple. Tani and two other virgins had been established in a small house on the south bank of the river. The ground floor of the dwelling had been converted into a shrine. The days passed peacefully if monotonously ; many hours were spent in praise and worship, and when these were over and the simple details of the household done, the time hung heavy on the girls' hands. Occasionally Tukaram would visit them, and in discussing schemes which he had formulated the women would momentarily catch some of his infectious enthusiasm. But with the departure of the priest the fires would quickly die out, and the relapse which followed would be painful. "The trivial round, the common task," were performed mechanically, almost heartlessly ; the chants and prayers, which had been learnt by rote, were repeated aimlessly ; there were no amusements and no resources. Tani brooded over the memory of her childhood and her days of liberty, and her heart sank as she looked out upon the fortress of Raogadh, where Rama did his soldier's duty. At night she would watch the fires which blazed on the hills—signals to the Mahratta warriors of the movement of caravans laden with treasure, or of the approach of foes. When her aunt could snatch an interval from her household toil she would come to her niece and, finding her pensive and sad, would almost break her down with endearments. She had her own troubles, for Damodhar's wrath had fallen on Dhondur, and money and grain could be obtained only at exorbitant rates of interest. Dhondur had grown morose and silent, and his wife suffered from his ill temper ; but she hid her sorrow from the girl.

One of the temples in the town of Shivpur was dedicated to Kali (the goddess of blood), another incarnation of Mahadev's *sakti* or wife.

The head of this temple was a young ambitious priest named Narain. He was jealous of the power and influence which Tukaram exercised and hated his innovations. Tukaram preached self-restraint and self-denial. Narain appealed to baser natures. Each divinity in the Hindu Pantheon has a dual incarnation—a male and a female—the former strong, the latter weak. As one or other of these incarnations were adopted as individual patron saints, the particular virtue or vice of the chosen deity was given prominence; extremes led to asceticism on the one side, or licentiousness on the other. Tukaram was a right hand, or male worshipper; Narain, a left hand, or female worshipper. The left hand worshippers pretended to work magic, and included a number of female devotees who lent themselves to the most shameful profligacies, the gains of their unholy calling adding to the revenues of the temple dedicated to their patron deity. Narain contended that Tukaram's virgins brought in no revenue. He had many followers; indeed, had it not been the fear of the warriors at Raogadh, who were strong partisans of Tukaram, Tani and her companions would have fared ill. Rama was one of Tukaram's most active supporters. His affection for Tani had not abated; but so long as she chose to devote her life to the service of Mahadev, he was determined that she should remain pure. Narain dared not provoke the anger of the soldiery by any overt act, but he schemed in secret with Damodhar to compass the ruin of Tani and her companions. It was the festival of *Holi*, and the left hand worshippers held high carnival. Men dressed as women paraded the streets, and no respectable woman could in safety walk abroad. The house of the virgins had been provisioned for the days of the carnival, and Tukaram had given them the strictest injunctions to keep the door locked and that they should neither venture out nor admit any one into the house.

On the second day of the festival, worship being over and their fast broken, Tani and her companions were assembled in the upper room when a commotion outside the house took them to the window. A party of ten or twelve men had gathered in the roadway and were annoying a respectably dressed female, who, with her cloth drawn over her face, was apparently en-

deavouring to escape from their jestings and indecent assaults. The clothing of the men had been plentifully besprinkled with red powder, and their eyes leered as they danced round the woman, who uttered piercing cries as she was caught in the arms of one or other of her tormentors. The girls pitied the woman, but they remembered Tukaram's injunctions, besides, what help could they give? Presently a huge ruffian caught the woman in his arms, raised her above his head, then dashed her to the ground, where she lay motionless, apparently stunned. Seeing the woman fall, the men dispersed and disappeared. What was to be done? The injured woman lay at the threshold of the house; the girls could hear the groans, and her clothing was blood-stained. Surely they might drag her in, bolt the door and attend to her injuries. Tani did not lack personal courage, and her duty seemed clear. Bidding the others stay, she crept down the staircase and cautiously opened the door. The street was deserted, and Tani called to the prostrate woman, who moaned in reply. Crossing the threshold, she knelt beside the body. With a rapid movement the figure rose, and before she could realise that it was a man, a sheet had been passed round Tani's head, she was lifted from the ground and swiftly borne away. So quickly had the capture been effected that the street was empty before the other girls understood what had happened.

Stifled by the cloth round her head, Tani could neither struggle nor cry out. When she came to her senses she found herself bound to a litter; her mouth was gagged so that she could breathe freely, but could only utter the faintest sound. She could hear men's voices in coarse song as they danced to the music of a tom-tom. The music ceased and the curtains of the litter were drawn aside and Damodhar's head appeared. His face was flushed, his clothing daubed with red, and his grin more wolf-like than ever.

"I have got you at last, my pretty bird. Nay, close not thine eyes; to-day I am the incarnation of Krishna—a sportive god, and you are lent to me." He laughed loudly and withdrew. Tani grew cold and shivered.

After a brief interval the litter was raised, and the bearers

moved swiftly forward; presently the splash of waters and the rocking of the litter told the girl that the party were crossing the river by a ford at some distance above the bridge. On the north side of the stream there was a brief halt and an altercation. Surely that was Tukaram's voice pleading and threatening? A scuffle and a fall and the party moved on. She feared that Tukaram had been injured. She closed her eyes and prayed. Her right hand withdrew something from her waist. It was the silk square that Rama had given her on her wedding day. She was in danger now, but who would bear it to Rama? A wild hope that if it could be dropped Rama might discover it and follow the clue, took possession of her. In any case, unless she were rescued soon she would be for ever lost, and would be unworthy to retain the gift. With some difficulty she managed to push the handkerchief to the edge of the litter, but could get it no farther—the litter tilted and the cloth fluttered to the ground. But the action was discovered. "Hallo," said a voice, "the little queen has dropped her flag—I will be her standard-bearer. See how gaily it dances at the point of my lance." Tani lay back in despair. Surely Mahadev had entirely deserted her? There was another halt, and the litter was set down to allow the bearers to recover their breath. She heard orders issued for the shorter men to take the front pole, and the taller men the back—they were about to ascend the hill.

What was that? She held her breath, and her heart beat quicker. Surely horsemen moving quickly over the ground? Now the sounds were clearer and nearer: the men about the litter had taken alarm, and there was a whispered consultation. The ground throbbed with the beat of hoofs, and a current of air stirred the curtains of the litter. All thoughts of herself vanished, and the girl lay paralysed by the horror of conflict—the rasp of steel; the sickening thud of sword and lance piercing flesh and bone; the stumble of horse and man; the prayer for mercy, and, above the din, the harsh battle-cry, "*Hur-hur Mahadev!*" as the horsemen charged home.

A short, fierce fight—the curtains of the litter were drawn aside, and Rama cut the cords that bound her. Tani shuddered

at the evidences of the strife. Almost opposite her was the body of Damodhar : blood mingled with the daubs of red on his clothing and face, his mouth open and lips drawn back—a dead wolf!

A low vaulted chamber in the fortress of Raogadh, the quarters of Rama, the *naik*. Its east window opened on to a small balcony which overhangs the precipice and commands a view of the road leading to the principal gate of the fort and of the highway below : here Rama stood sentinel. On the west side of the room a *purdah*, or curtain, covered the exit to a courtyard. A small door in the north wall led to a covered passage which communicated with the main gate. The apartment was simply furnished, a camp cot, and a rough wooden box for a wardrobe. A couple of earthenware waterpots on a stand and a brass drinking cup were in one corner, and opposite these a shield, two long spears, a sword, and a cruel-looking dagger. A round lamp with seven wicks was suspended from the roof by a chain of brass.

On the cot lay the wounded and unconscious Tukaram covered with a quilt, his head resting on a clumsy bolster. Tani crouched at his feet, a fan in her right hand, her head resting on her left arm, limp and worn with anxiety and want of sleep. There was no sound except the sonorous breathing of the sick man and the splutter of exhausted oil. A silver streak in the heavens heralded the dawn. Presently, in a low, pained voice, the priest called Rama. The woman rose, and beckoned to the trooper, who entered the room, and noiselessly dropping on his knees at the bedside, touched the sick man's right hand with his forehead. Tani knelt beside him.

Tukaram opened his eyes, and for some seconds looked at the couple, then, in short, broken speech, he said :

"The clouds have rolled by—and I have clearer vision—the destiny of man and woman—the unity of kindred souls—that white-faced preacher who came from across the black waters was a good man—pity that he ate the flesh of cows—what said his Holy One?—'God made them male and female—for this

cause shall a man leave his father and mother. In this lies truth and life—for this is love.' ”

He paused, and his eyes closed ; then he clasped his hands, and his lips moved. The woman bent over him, and caught a prayer.

After a while, with glazed eyes, but with a smile on his face, he raised himself for a moment on his elbow ; there was triumph in his voice :

“ Mahadev !—Mahadev !—Hur-hur Mahadev ! ”

A sunbeam crept through the casement and lit with fire and gold the sacred pigments on a brow damp with the dews of death.

F. A. SPENCER.

